

ALEXANDER  
HENDERSON  
THE COVENANTER

J. PRINGLE THOMSON







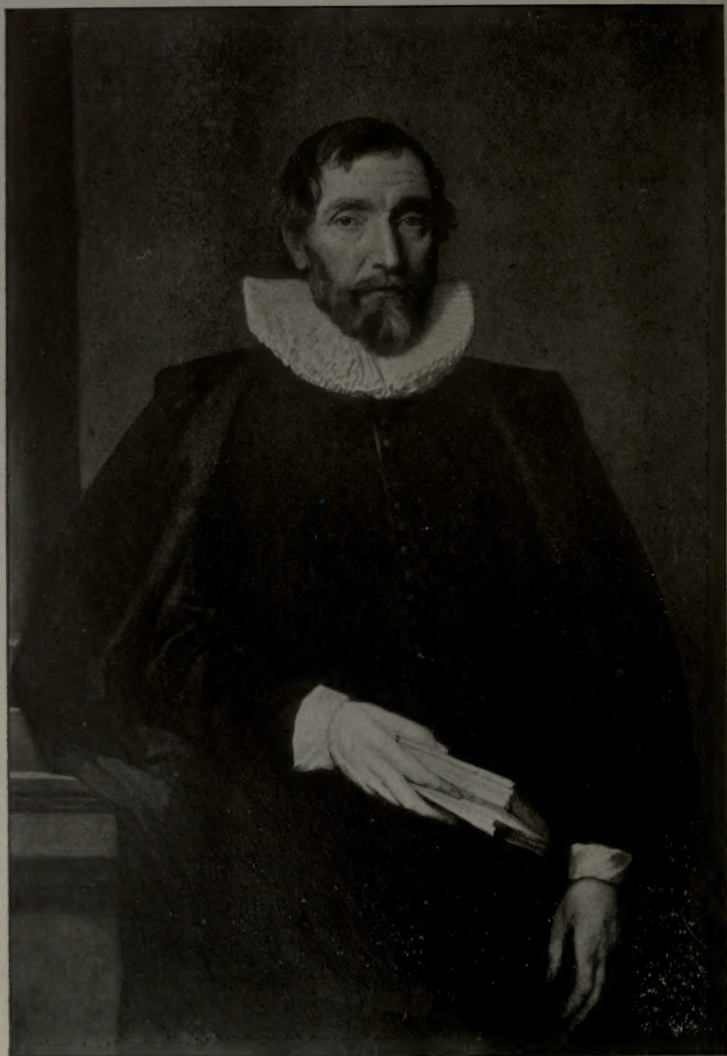


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*From the picture in Vester House, by permission of the Marquis of Tweeddale*



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BY

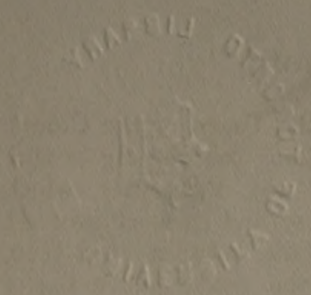
JAMES PRINGLE THOMSON  
M.A.

WITH FOREWORD BY  
LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH

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## Foreword

THE period which followed the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England contains the opening of that contest between Presbytery and Episcopacy, which occupies so much of our history, and some of its most interesting episodes took place between 1618-1646, the years which comprise the active public life of him who is the subject of the following pages. For this reason the life and career of Alexander Henderson must always possess the greatest interest to any student of Scottish history.

The most characteristic point in this period, as in others, is the desire of the Scottish people to keep their Church independent of all secular control. The policy, begun by James VI. after his accession to the English throne, and continued by his son, not only subverted this but also offended the Scottish sentiments of Patriotism and of Freedom. As it proceeded, the issue became one not only for ecclesiastical, but also for national independence, for the right of the people as well as of the Church against the will of the Sovereign. The five Articles of Perth, for example, are open to condemnation, much less for what they contain than on account of the authority by which they were introduced, and the methods by which that authority was sought to be enforced.

I venture to claim for Mr. Pringle Thomson that

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he has fairly presented the chief incidents of Henderson's life, and that he has added to our knowledge of the man who is the subject of his study. It is not too much to say that no great cause or party can, at the present day, be benefited by a judgment which is unduly favourable to the protagonists, either on the Royalist and Episcopal side, or those of the popular or Presbyterian party. Neither Monarchy nor Episcopacy can gain by a defence of the conduct of Charles I. and Archbishop Laud, who sought to coerce Scotland into the adoption of the form of Church Government, which found favour in their sight. They were in reality the worst enemies that Episcopacy has ever had in Scotland. But neither will any fair minded Presbyterian now hold the cause which they represented as responsible for their actions. It only tends to discredit Presbyterianism if we fail to admit that some of those who stood for it in its times of difficulty and stress, were not less guilty of proceedings which we cannot justify. Nor is it too much to say that no Presbyterian Church now accepts all the doctrines which those who signed the Solemn League and Covenant deemed to be of vital importance.

Like many another famous in the annals of our country, Henderson was educated at the University of St. Andrews. Comparatively little is recorded about him till 1617, when, as Minister of Leuchars, he came to the front as a Presbyterian leader. Having regard to the necessities of his time, Henderson was well fitted to carry on the traditions of Knox and Melville, and the testimony of Baillie, his contemporary and fellow-worker, was that he is "incomparably the ablest man of us all for all things." And having regard to the cir-



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cumstances in which he was placed, it is no discredit to him to say that his career shows him to have been rather a statesman and a man of affairs, than a theologian. A man of whom it can be said that he was one of the first to withstand the influence which imposed the five Articles of Perth upon a reluctant Church, who was three times Moderator of the General Assembly, including the Assembly of 1638, who was a leader at the signing of the Covenant, and the actual writer of the Solemn League and Covenant, the trusted leader of the Scottish delegates to the Westminster Assembly, and one whose correspondence with Charles I. on the respective merits of Presbytery and Prelacy is preserved, has no mean title to a place among the notable sons of Scotland.

The Presbyterians of Henderson's day were not republicans, and they had little less affection for all that Cromwell's Independents stood for, than for Episcopacy itself. Nearly all of them were anxious to support the Monarchy, but the monarchs chiefly concerned were responsible for making it impossible.

The main position which Henderson and his colleagues occupied was beyond all question fair and right. It was to conserve the National and Ecclesiastical Independence against the improper use of the Royal prerogative. It was perhaps inevitable, but it is a cause of unceasing regret that as the contest grew more bitter on both sides, so the National Covenant which, as proposed and defended by Henderson, was entirely justifiable, afterwards became a basis of persecution and disloyalty. Henderson, himself, was too judicious and sober to have been led into the violent courses of the later part of the century,

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and Scotland was fortunate to have had among her sons such a man in the years between 1617 and 1646. The contest, during Henderson's time at any rate, was for legitimate freedom, and if it afterwards degenerated into a determination to interfere with the reasonable freedom of others, the responsibility does not lie with any of the chief leaders during the period which this book covers.

BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH.

KENNET,  
*24th September, 1912.*

## Preface

No apology need be made for the appearance of this short sketch of the life of Alexander Henderson. The first historian to do justice to him was Aiton, whose monumental "Life and Times of Henderson," published in 1836, is really an ecclesiastical history of the period. Ten years later Dr. M'Crie brought out a short biography, together with a selection of Henderson's sermons. Since that date no one has attempted anything like an exhaustive survey, although our historical knowledge has been greatly widened during the last sixty years.

While deeply indebted to the two writers mentioned above, I have gone in every case to the original authorities for my information. Reference to recently published books and documents has enabled me to include some details about Henderson which do not appear in the earlier biographies.

I have to express my thanks to Lord Balfour of Burleigh for his courtesy in writing the Foreword to this book, and my debt is the greater, as but for his generous encouragement it would never have been attempted. To Mr. J. D. Mackie, M.A., Lecturer on Modern History at St. Andrews, who has kindly read the proofs and assisted me with valuable advice, I have also to express my indebtedness.

EDINBURGH, *September*, 1912.





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# I

## Henderson's Youth and Early Manhood

THE Church of Scotland has ever been fortunate in its leaders. Surveying its history, we may say that every emergency brought forth the man to grapple with it. John Knox accomplished the Reformation in Scotland, though the ground had been prepared by the efforts of earlier martyrs; and he it was who carried the new faith safely through all the perils of its early years, so that when he died Scotland had recognised its national affinity to the system of Calvin. Next, however, the Church was menaced by a section of its own supporters. Tempted by the immense wealth of the ancient establishment, the nobles cast about for means to enrich themselves out of its revenues, and the result was the institution of Tulchan bishops, and the beginning likewise of that struggle between Episcopacy and Presbytery which was to fill so large a space in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland.

The unblushing system of simony which ensued, and the general subordination of the Church to the State, boded ill for the cause of true religion, but here, again, a leader was forthcoming who, by his vigour and ability, was to prove no unworthy successor of Knox. This was the famous Andrew Melville who feared neither king nor commoner,

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and who warred with might and main against episcopacy. When James VI. began to cherish his insidious theory of the divine right of kings, it was Melville who met him with equally high notions of spiritual authority, and the conflict between Stuart absolutism and Presbyterian Hildebrandism, to quote Hallam's famous phrase, began in deadly earnest. Though the actual victory lay with the King, whose high-handed policy mastered the Presbyterian clergy, and succeeded to a large degree in assimilating the Church of Scotland to the Church of England, another champion was shortly to arise and lead a second Reformation which undid all that James and his son had so laboriously built up.

This was Alexander Henderson, the subject of the following sketch, who, whether as churchman or statesman, is worthy to rank with his illustrious predecessors, whose work, but for him, would have counted for nothing. That this is no exaggerated statement must be evident to those who have given the ecclesiastical history of Scotland even the most cursory attention. Yet, for some reason or other, Henderson's great eminence as a leader has never received adequate recognition. Unlike Knox and Melville, he has never hit the popular fancy, and even those better informed have been accustomed to regard him as a very minor satellite in comparison with these twin constellations. Why this should be, it is difficult to understand, for if Knox was the guiding spirit of the first Reformation, Henderson was no less the genius of the second. One explana-



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tion may be that while Knox and Melville were fighters as well as statesmen, Henderson's talents were rather of the diplomatic order. The former pair were for ever coming into sharp conflict with royalty; Henderson, on the other hand, although his principles were equally sound, managed constantly to remain on friendly terms with his King.

It is only when we look at the Church of Scotland during the years immediately prior to Henderson's period of ascendancy, and then note the disasters which befell it after his death, that we begin to realise the debt we owe him. The following survey of his life and work is an endeavour to show what is the extent of that debt.

Alexander Henderson was a native of Fife, having been born at or near the village of Luthrie, in the parish of Creich, some time during the year 1583. Of his parentage and family circumstances we know little or nothing. Tradition asserts that he was the son of a feuar, and that he was a cadet of the Hendersons of Fordel, an old Scottish family. The latter statement has every appearance of correctness, for Henderson's remains lie in the family burying-ground in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, while a contemporary portrait of him remains in the possession of the house to this day.

We may conjecture that Henderson's early education was that of the average Scots youth of his time, since we do not hear of him till the 19th of December, 1599; on which date, at the age of

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sixteen, he matriculated at St. Salvator's College, in the University of St. Andrews. Here he studied under Principal James Martine till 1603, when he proceeded to the degree of M.A. Even at this stage his abilities were recognised, and he was appointed a Professor or Regent of Philosophy, a position which he occupied till 1611. During this time he also completed his course in divinity, and probably the influence of Andrew Melville, who taught at St. Andrews till 1607, had not a little to do in shaping the course of his after life.

For the nonce, however, the doctrines of the great antagonist of episcopacy left him untouched, and he was known as a strong anti-Presbyterian and a staunch upholder of Archbishop Gladstones, who afterwards became his patron.

In the light of his after career, we must not attach too much importance to Henderson's views on Church government at this time. The attitude of the whole of Fife subsequent to 1546 had been strongly pro-Presbyterianism, but the University of St. Andrews, as a corporate body, had kept studiously aloof from this emancipatory movement. Thrown into such an atmosphere at a time when his mind was immature, it is not to be wondered at that Henderson readily accepted the views of his academic preceptors. It must also be remembered that what began merely as an attack on Church government ended in an attack on Church doctrine. It may have been the latter point which moved Henderson, whom changes in the former system left unconcerned.

The only fact to be gleaned about Henderson's



*[Photo, Valentine]*

LEUCHARS CHURCH



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later academic career is that he was Quæstor of the Faculty of Arts in 1610, in which capacity we find him signing the faculty accounts.

Between 17th December, 1613, and 26th January, 1614, he was presented to the parish of Leuchars, a quiet country village lying some six miles to the north-east of St. Andrews. The patronage of the living belonged to Gladstones, who thus repaid the admiration of his youthful preceptor. The parishioners of the district, however, were of another opinion, and being Presbyterians to a man, they determined to oppose the arch-episcopal nominee. Accordingly, when Henderson and his friends reached the church, they found the door securely nailed up, and were forced to make a somewhat undignified entrance through one of the windows.

In the comparative seclusion in which he now found himself, we can imagine the gradually changing attitude of Henderson's mind. Situated in a hotbed of Presbyterianism, he was bound to come into contact with men like Scott, the minister of Cupar, whose arguments must have given him much food for thought. Two circumstances occurred to hasten the change, the first being the death of his old patron, Archbishop Gladstones, in 1615, and the second, a timely sermon preached in a neighbouring parish by Robert Bruce, minister of Kinnaird. Attracted probably by the fame of the preacher (so the story goes), Henderson slipped into the quietest and most secluded corner of the church, thinking thereby to preserve his anonymity. It must,



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therefore, have seemed to him the direct intervention of Providence when the preacher gave out as his text: "He that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber."

This fortuitous accident—if, indeed, we regard it as such—made a deep and lasting impression on Henderson, and we find an echo of it in his moderatorial sermon, delivered to the famous Glasgow Assembly in 1638. He said on that occasion: "There are divers among us that have had no such warrant for our entry to the ministry as were to be wished. Alas! how many of us have rather sought the Kirk than the Kirk sought us! How many have rather gotten the Kirk given to them, than they have been given to the Kirk for the good thereof! And yet there must be a great difference put between those who have lived many years in an unlawful office without warrant of God, and therefore must be abominable in the sight of God, and those who in some respects have entered unlawfully, and with an ill conscience, and afterwards have come to see the evil of this, and to do what in them lies to repair the injury. If there were any faults or wrong steps in our entry (as who of us are free!), acknowledge the Lord's calling of us if we have since got a seal from heaven of our ministry, and let us labour with diligence and faithfulness in our office."

Certain it is that from this time forward Henderson began to come to the front as an exponent of Presbyterian doctrines, and an

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opportunity for publicly showing his zeal was quickly afforded him.

Before speaking of the Perth Assembly of 1618, which was really the spark that kindled the powder of the second Reformation, we may briefly note the attempts made by a determined king to foist episcopacy on his unwilling subjects. In 1609 it was determined that bishops should have administration of justice in all spiritual and ecclesiastical causes, as formerly enjoyed by their predecessors in Roman Catholic times. In this same year two Courts of High Commission were erected, one in each archbishopric. The Glasgow Assembly of 1610 marked another stage in the demolition of the Presbyterian polity of the Church, for here it was decided that the calling of Assemblies was the prerogative of the King, while in 1612 the legal status of bishops was definitely ratified.

Having neglected his northern subjects for nine years, James paid a long deferred visit to Scotland in 1617, the chief outcome of which was the proposals subsequently known as the Five Articles of Perth.

It soon became apparent that these high-handed proceedings were not to be submitted to without a struggle, and in August (1618) Presbyterian stalwarts from all parts of Scotland flocked to the old town of St. Johnstone. As was natural, Fife was strongly represented, and its ministerial contingent included Mr. Alexander Henderson of Leuchars.

To the Court party such men were anathema,

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and we find Lord Binning writing to the King that on coming to town he discovered that so many presbyteries, especially those of Fife and the Lothians, had sent such precise and wilful Puritans, that he was extremely doubtful of the issue. As we now know, thanks to a judicious blending of bribery and intimidation, the Five Articles were passed, despite the strong protests of a resolute minority of some forty-seven members, one of whom was Alexander Henderson. In token of the esteem in which he was already held, Henderson was nominated along with Mr. William Scott, one of the most eminent men of his day, to a charge in Edinburgh. But the hostility of the bishops carried the day against him, and no more was heard of the proposal.

Henderson was now looked on as one of the coming men in the crusade against episcopacy. On 6th April, 1619, he was reported to the Synod of Fife as having administered the communion not according to the prescribed order; and it was doubtless this and other fearless acts which led people to assume that he was the author of a pamphlet entitled *Perth Assembly*. As a matter of fact, though he may have collaborated in its production, the person chiefly responsible was David Calderwood. Nevertheless, Henderson was cited to appear before the High Commission Court at St. Andrews in the following August, though the matter seems to have been compromised, as we find him exercising his parochial duties without any intermission.

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For the next eighteen years we hear little or nothing of Henderson, and any facts there are merely refer to his ordinary work as a minister. It is greatly to be regretted that the records of this particular period, when he was arming himself for the coming fray, should be so barren. We are safe in conjecturing, however, that his time was fully and wisely employed. The fact that when the crisis came, he at once stepped into the front rank, shows that his influence and reputation had grown apace. Probably, too, during this period of preparation he was storing his mind with the learning which was one day to confound the Aberdeen doctors. Local duties must have claimed a large share of his attention, and we hear of him acting on various synodal committees, and attending the private conferences of the faithful held in default of a regularly convened General Assembly.

His steadily growing importance in the councils of his party was emphasised by the efforts which were made to secure his promotion to Stirling (29th September, 1631), and to Dumbarton in the following year, but his hour was not yet. We may, therefore, close the first part of his career at this point, as the events leading to the drafting of the National Covenant require to be briefly summarised, and when we next meet Henderson, it is in surroundings widely different from the retirement of the quiet rural parish where he had spent the better half of his life.



## II

# The Book of Canons and Laud's Liturgy

WITH all his faults, James VI. could gauge the temper of the Scottish people with considerable accuracy. Eager as he might be to hasten the cause of episcopacy in the country, he knew when to hold his hand, and the stir occasioned by the Perth Articles showed him that the time was not ripe for further innovations. From this belief not all the proselytising zeal of Laud could move him, and all his entreaties were answered with the words: "You know not the stomach of the Scots people."

On the accession of Charles, however, Laud and his party came into their own. Charles himself was a firm believer in that divine origin of episcopacy which his father, with all his love for bishops, had expressly denied. When we remember that although perfectly sincere in his beliefs and methods, Charles was utterly incapable of comprehending or yielding to any opposition to his royal will, we need not be surprised that the storm ultimately broke and overwhelmed all who had called it into life.

In addition to this wilful obstinacy, Charles had the misfortune to be ill-served by the very servants in whom he reposed the greatest trust. So long as Spottiswoode held the reins in



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Scotland, a mild and tolerant episcopacy was rapidly growing, while at the same time the robust spirits like Henderson were allowed to retain their offices without fear of persecution. It is probable that had Charles been content to let well alone, a *rapprochement* would have taken place between presbytery and episcopacy, and a modification of the latter system would have become firmly established in the land. However, it was destined otherwise, and by a successive series of blunders Charles succeeded in alienating his moderate supporters, and arrayed against himself the strongest forces in the country, forces supported by the almost unanimous voice of public opinion.

It is a truism to state that the purest ebullition of patriotism is often caused by the wholly selfish motives of interested parties or individuals, and certainly the second Reformation owed its success in no small measure to the co-operation of practically the whole Scottish nobility. Against the combined strength of the aristocracy and the democracy, the King stood practically alone, and there was but one possible outcome in such a struggle.

Within eight months of his accession Charles, casting around for means to strengthen his throne and his bishops, passed a gigantic Act of Revocation annexing all the Church and Crown lands that had been alienated since 1542. At first, the nobles could hardly realise the meaning of the new proposals, but when they awoke to the truth, their opposition was deep and wide-

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spread. With that tenacity of purpose which ever characterised him, Charles determined not to give way, and the struggle continued till 1629.

Owing to pressure of circumstances, the new scheme included a readjustment of the whole system of teinds or tithes, and this, while proving an inestimable boon to the clergy and small landowners, was viewed by the suspicious nobility as a deep-laid attempt to undermine their ancestral authority. Other minor causes helped to fan the flame. At the Perth Assembly, disputes about precedence had arisen between the bishops and the nobles, and these quarrels, though temporarily forgotten, all helped to rouse the conflagration against the episcopal settlement when the appointed hour came.

In 1633 Charles paid his long-delayed visit to Scotland, and was crowned with great pomp and solemnity in Edinburgh. With him was Laud, and it was easy to see that the ritualistic practices, so abhorrent to the great mass of the people, were to be encouraged and fostered. A Parliament at which the King was present confirmed all the Acts of James relating to religion, and, not without considerable difficulty, passed another granting to the King the right to determine the apparel of kirkmen.

The opposition of the nobility was already declared, and it was turned into active hostility by the notorious state trial of Lord Balmerino for high treason in 1635. Without going into the details of this case, it may safely be said that

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its effect was to make the nobles feel that, under the present *régime*, no man singled out for attack by the bishops had any reasonable security either for his life or his estates. The pardon extended to Lord Balmerino showed that this widespread fear and resentment had not been without its effect. A finishing touch was lent, if such were needed, by the appointment of the Archbishop of St. Andrews as Lord Chancellor of Scotland, the highest office in the State, and one which the nobility considered the exclusive prerogative of their order. Thus Charles had managed, within the space of ten years, to alienate completely the most important section of his Scottish subjects. His next step completed the disintegration of the episcopal polity, by arraying in opposition the united forces of the common people.

It has already been remarked that Spottiswoode had tempered his episcopal proposals with a wise moderation. Unfortunately, however, as Laud's influence with the King increased, that of the Scottish primate waned proportionately. So strong, indeed, did Laud become, that in a short time he was able to nominate his own followers to the vacant Scottish sees, and it was due to the foolish advice of this younger school, typical of whom were Maxwell, Bishop of Ross, and Wedderburn, Bishop of Dunkeld, that the subsequent troubles befell Scotland.

At the time of his coronation, Charles had expressed in unmistakable language his determination to mould the Scottish Church in conformity with the episcopal pattern across the border.

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To do this satisfactorily, it was necessary to do away with Knox's "Book of Discipline," and also the "Book of Common Order," two Reformation relics which had survived the iconoclasm of the last twenty years. Charles at first thought of compelling the use of the English Prayer-Book, but on it being represented to him that this might imply a purpose of reducing Scotland to the level of an English province, he was persuaded to modify his original intention. Accordingly, two of the Scottish bishops were empowered to carry out certain alterations on the existing model.

The Book of Canons, however, appeared first. It was ratified by the King in May, 1635, and was published in January, 1636, under the title, "Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiastical for the Government of the Church of Scotland." A more preposterous piece of work was probably never foisted on an indignant people. As one writer has remarked, "It was the decalogue with the negative struck out; the creed with a negative put in." It is impossible to give in detail the amazing revolutions suggested, but we may note that the Liturgy was sanctioned before it was actually framed, and that kirk-sessions and presbyteries, the very bed-rock of the whole Church system, were abolished under the new designation of conventicles. To sum up, its whole texture and spirit was manifestly Popish, and as such, the book was calculated to arouse the utmost antagonism of a people in whose breasts two decades of episcopacy had not stilled the hatred of the "Pape" and his works.



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The people were not left long in suspense, for in May, 1637, the famous Liturgy, which was destined to plunge the country into internecine strife, was ushered in with all the pomp and circumstance of royal sanction and episcopal approval. At every mercat cross it was proclaimed that all men should conform to the new worship under pain of horning, and that every parish procure for its use at least two copies of the Prayer-Book.

It is almost impossible to convey any idea of the instantaneous and widespread hostility manifested against this "Popish-English-Scottish-Mass-Service-Book." The opposition was three-fold. First, the book had been imposed by the mere fiat of the King, without the consent either of General Assembly or Parliament. Secondly, it came from England; and finally, it was Popish. It was this last fact which roused the laity. Academic disputes about Church government or points of ritual left them untouched; but this struck nearer home, and it was early apparent, even to the zealots of the Privy Council, that the Liturgy would not be adopted without a struggle, the more so as the nobility straightway declared against the obnoxious innovations.

It was not till the 16th of July that the fatal order arrived, directing the introduction of the Prayer-Book on the following Sunday. The events of 23rd July are too well known to bear repetition. The riot in the Middle Church of St. Giles was a definite indication that the common people were roused. Those in higher



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stations were biding their time, and were prepared to act in a more constitutional manner, though with no less emphatic determination. We may note here that Henderson, along with others, is blamed by the episcopal historian Guthrie, for inciting the rabble to violence.\* But this charge is sustained by no other contemporary evidence, and as searching investigation into the causes of the riot was made by the Town Council of Edinburgh, we may reject it as unfounded.

None the less, it was from his quiet parish of Leuchars that Alexander Henderson came forward as the champion of the outraged nation, and showed in no uncertain manner the illegality of the recent proceedings. Nothing is more remarkable in the career of this man than the suddenness with which he emerged from comparative obscurity and took his undisputed place alongside leaders like Rothes, Balmerino, Johnstone, and Argyll. For the next ten years no event of any importance occurred in Scotland in which Henderson, now in the prime of his powers, did not play a leading part.

On 13th July, proceedings had been commenced against Henderson and other ministers in the presbytery of St. Andrews for not obeying the Privy Council's proclamation in regard to the Liturgy. On 23rd August the ministers carried the war into the enemy's camp by presenting bills of suspension to the Privy Council

\* "Ane meingzie of discontented Puritans," Spalding calls them ("History," pp. 46-7).

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anent the letters of horning which had been issued against them. They did this on the ground that the recent innovations were illegal, never having received the sanction of the General Assembly or of Parliament. They further declared that they had offered to take a copy of the book in order to study its contents before deciding on its use, but not even this had been conceded.

This step put the Council in a quandary. A direct refutation of the complaints was impossible; so, on 25th August, they compromised matters by affirming that it was compulsory to buy the Liturgy, but not to use it. The significance of this moral victory was generally understood, the more so, as on 29th July the Council had temporarily suspended the use of the obnoxious Liturgy.

Charles, however, was highly displeased with this pusillanimous display. It mattered not that the Privy Council was sitting in Edinburgh, and was able to judge of the state of the country at first-hand, while Charles was at Whitehall, where the very name of Scotland was never mentioned, as we know from contemporary evidence. Disregarding the advice of the more moderate bishops, on 20th September he sent down peremptory instructions, ordering the immediate observance of the ritual, and rebuking the Council for their conduct. No sooner was the King's rash decision intimated than the four ministers, of whom Henderson was the leading spirit, renewed their petition. On this occasion, however, they did not stand alone. Within the

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space of one day no fewer than sixty-nine petitions against the Service-Book reached the Privy Council from all parts of the lowlands. The signatories included twenty-four peers, a great many of the gentry, sixty-six commissioners from towns and parishes, and nearly one hundred ministers.

On the principle of choosing the lesser of two evils, the harassed councillors decided that the conciliation of the insistent petitioners was of paramount importance; accordingly, they decided not to enforce the use of the Liturgy, and dispatched the Duke of Lennox to lay the true state of affairs before the King.

Meanwhile, the petitioners were not idle. To the more optimistic, it appeared that their case was already well won. Charles, they reasoned, had not realised that in yielding to a whim of the bishops, he was angering the whole mass of his loyal subjects. Although published by royal assent, the contents of the new Liturgy had not been fully laid before the King; and now that the matter was to be explained to him, he would use his discretion, and withdraw the detested innovation. Nevertheless, although these were the opinions of many, no effort was spared by the petitioners to obtain a thoroughly representative following. In an incredibly short space of time, the opposition had been marshalled practically throughout the whole country. In towns and villages, meetings of protest were held, petitions were prepared, and men of light and leading were urged to hasten to the

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capital, there to await the King's answer to their requests.

Towards 17th October the Scottish metropolis filled up with crowds from every burgh and shire, all being animated with the same Protestant zeal. On that date the long expected answer arrived, and was proclaimed at the market-place to expectant thousands. Whatever had been their hopes before, it was now realised that, far from being over, the struggle was just begun. Confident in his own rectitude, and contemptuous of the opposition of what he reckoned an inconsiderable minority, Charles hoped to establish his own supremacy by prompt and drastic action. The Privy Council, in so far as it was called for ecclesiastical purposes, was ordered to dissolve at once; all strangers were to return to their homes within twenty-four hours, under pain of horning; the courts of justice were to be removed from the capital; and, most ominous of all, Charles unhesitatingly assumed entire responsibility for the Liturgy.

The scenes which followed this announcement completely eclipsed the earlier disturbances. With the utmost difficulty the Bishop of Galloway was rescued from a mob, which itched to tear him limb from limb. The Privy Council were besieged in one building, and the magistrates in another; while Traquair, the Lord Treasurer, was almost trampled to death. In vain was a proclamation issued forbidding strangers to assemble in the streets. The mob



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held undisputed sway, and defied law and order with impunity. In the face of Baillie's evidence\* we cannot be blind to the fact that these ONGOINGS were more or less openly countenanced by the leading malcontents. But the more constitutional methods of protest were also adhered to. Meetings of the nobility, gentry, burgesses, and ministers were held, at which the exigencies of the situation were carefully discussed, and united action decided on.

None took a more prominent part in these gatherings than Henderson, whose influence in the party was growing every day, and who is described as being a "bold and able leader." After the latest proclamation a drastic step was approved, and its consequences were of far-reaching effect. Hitherto, the agitation had been carried on mainly against the Canons and the Liturgy. Henderson now proposed that they should broaden the basis of their demands, and complain of the bishops as underminers of religion.† A petition, drafted on these lines by Henderson and Lord Balmerino, but revised by David Dickson and Lord Loudon, was subscribed by numerous noblemen and gentry, by hundreds of ministers, and by all the burghs except Aberdeen. It was then presented to the Privy Council. In the town, too, the agitation went steadily on, other petitions being sent up in the name of all the men, women, children, and servants in Edinburgh.

\* Letters 2, 3, and 4.

† Baillie, Letter 4.



## The Book of Canons and Laud's Liturgy

Their work being done for the moment, the reformers agreed to separate and reassemble on the 15th of November, when their matured complaints should again be presented in the proper quarters. They had already achieved much; their ranks were compact and united; and while sincere in their loyalty to the Crown, they had resolved to defy the jurisdiction of the High Commission Court, on the grounds of its illegality.

### III

## The National Covenant

THE interval before their next meeting was employed to good purpose by the protesting party. In every quarter the faint-hearted were exhorted, and the courageous were strengthened in their resolution. On 15th November a greater crowd than before appeared in Edinburgh to support their demands. Mingling with the original petitioners were seen many new faces; and none was observed with greater interest than James, Earl and later Marquis of Montrose, who now definitely ranged himself on the side of the popular party.

Great was the apprehension of the authorities lest the presence of such an assemblage should lead to a repetition of the turbulent scenes of the previous month. Accordingly, the leaders were severally and collectively entreated to return home during the deliberations of the Council. They, on the other hand, maintained their right to protest, but promised to curb the zeal of their supporters. It is difficult to decide whence such a proposal originated, but it was ultimately resolved that the body of suppliants should entrust their affairs to commissioners who were to be made as representative as possible. This arrangement was welcomed by both sides.

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The expense of constant journeyings to the capital was a heavy drain on the purses of most of the petitioners, and they were only too glad to delegate their authority to a trustworthy few. On the other hand, the Privy Council were relieved from the constant apprehension of fresh disturbances, and it also occurred to them that things might go better for the King, when only the ringleaders remained to be dealt with.

Four permanent committees were therefore appointed, chosen respectively by nobles, gentry, ministers, and burghers. A member from each committee formed the central tribunal, whose word on all matters was final. Thus came into being the "Tables," which, in a short time, were to wield an authority beside which that of the Privy Council paled into insignificance. In the breadth and scope of their operations, they can only be compared to the Clubs formed in Paris during the French Revolution, and even then there is this difference, that while the French Clubs often neutralised each other, the Tables worked like a well-ordered machine. Constant references to Henderson \* show that at this time he was exercising an activity only paralleled by his colleague, David Dickson. Indeed, this couple—facetiously referred to by Baillie as the two archbishops—together with Rothes, Loudon, and Balmerino, dictated the policy of the great party whose fortunes they controlled.

During the opening weeks of December, the newly formed committees had numerous inter-

\* Baillie, Letter 4.

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views with members of the Privy Council, and great efforts were made by the latter body to create dissension in their ranks by urging each Table to petition individually. To these insidious proposals a determined refusal was given, but the suppliants were hard put to it to get their demands laid before the Council, who resorted to all sorts of subterfuges in the hope of gaining time. However, on 21st December, the expected meeting took place, and the Tables boldly demanded that the bishops be removed from their seats as parties in the case. After this master-stroke, the Tables drew up a "Historical Information," justifying their recent proceedings, and also an "Information" against the Service-Book, Book of Canons, and High Commisison Court.

Meantime, Charles, now somewhat perturbed at the extent of the opposition in Scotland, was being urged by the headstrong bishops to make short shrift of the rebels. In vain did Lord Treasurer Traquair represent the dangers of such a course. His star was not in the ascendant, and he was forced to return to Scotland with orders which, his better judgment assured him, would only accentuate the troubles in the country. Arriving at Dalkeith in February, 1638, he endeavoured to dissemble, and assured his friends in the opposite camp that the King intended nothing prejudicial to their interests. The sinister news leaked out, however, that the King had given his personal benediction to the Service-Book, and had forbidden fresh meetings

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of the suppliants under pain of treason. In the light of these facts, it was suspected that Traquair would endeavour to make his proclamation in such a manner that there would be no opportunity for a protest. Suspicion was changed to certainty, thanks to a chance conversation in a tavern being overheard, and when Traquair suddenly appeared with his proclamation at the market-place of Stirling,\* Lords Hume and Lindsay took legal instruments, and entered their solemn protest. The reading of the proclamation at Linlithgow and Edinburgh found the petitioners equally ready, and the Privy Council stood foiled at every turn.

Affairs had now reached a climax. It was clearly seen that the petitioners could hope for little from the King, and that they were faced by the alternatives of giving up all they had striven for, or going on in direct opposition to the royal commands. Their position at this juncture was far from enviable. The more irresolute of their supporters, consisting of those who still clung to a modified episcopacy, shrank from committing themselves to a course of which no one could foresee the end. Others who viewed the facts dispassionately, and knew the tempers of the King and Laud, realised that their only hope of success lay in aggressive action. On the part of the Privy Council, no effort was spared to sow dissension in their ranks, and had things gone on unchanged for much longer, there is no saying what the outcome might

\* 19th February, 1638.



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have been. However, there were a few men in the petitioning ranks who showed their ability to cope successfully with the greatest emergencies, and a small body, composed of the nobles, along with Henderson and Dickson, resolved on a master-stroke. This was nothing more or less than a covenant, to be subscribed by every adherent of the good cause.

The idea of a covenant, or band, was by no means new to the Scottish people. In 1581, when great fears of Popery were entertained, the whole nation, from the King downwards, subscribed a confession in which the chief errors of Romanism were solemnly abjured. It was now proposed by Henderson and Dickson that this covenant should be renewed, although "little inkling was given out of this at first to the rest."\* However, on the 23rd of February, the expediency of the proposal was eloquently proclaimed from the pulpits of the city.

Events moved quickly, and on 27th February, Henderson and Johnston of Warriston produced their draft of the Covenant. It consisted of three parts: First, the Covenant of 1581, as then drawn up by John Craig; next came a summary of the Acts of Parliament condemning popery, supposed to be the work of Johnstone; and lastly, the solemn declaration that the subscribers would continue in the profession of their religion; that they would resist all contrary errors to the uttermost of their power all the

\* Baillie, Letter 4.

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days of their lives ; that they would stand by His Majesty in support of the religion, liberties, and laws of the kingdom, and also by one another against all their enemies. This portion, which is of primary importance, is assumed to have been compiled by Henderson.

Naturally, it was not easy to reconcile the widely differing sections of the petitioners, some of whom would not admit the illegality of the Perth Articles, while others shrank from laying themselves open to a charge of treason. Thanks, however, to the indefatigable exertions of Henderson and others, concessions were made, clauses were altered, and finally, unanimity was secured.

Wednesday, 28th February, 1638, is outstanding in our historical calendar, for on that day the nobility and gentry of Scotland signified their adhesion to the popular cause by publicly subscribing the Covenant in the Church of Old Greyfriars. The building was thronged by the leaders of the movement, while great crowds, attracted by the solemnity of the occasion, waited patiently outside. After Henderson had prayed "very powerfully and pertinently" to the purpose in hand, the Covenant was produced for signature. It had been arranged that the leaders should be ready to answer any possible objections, and with this object Rothes and Henderson stood in the east end of the kirk. Led by the Earl of Sutherland, those in the church signed amid solemn enthusiasm, darkness alone putting an end to the business of subscrip-

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tion. It has now been definitely proved\* that only the nobles and barons took part in the proceedings, the ministers and commissioners of burghs subscribing in the Tailor's Hall on the following day, and the general populace not until the Friday.

After this no time was lost in sounding the feeling of the country, and copies of the Covenant were sent broadcast for signature. From practically every corner of the land the response was the same. Men, women, and children vied with each other in giving tangible proof of their zeal. All were aflame with the same earnest purpose, and well might Archbishop Spottiswoode exclaim: "Now all that we have been doing these thirty years past is thrown down at once." A word must be said, however, in connection with the charges that little children were permitted to subscribe the Covenant, and that in other cases coercive measures were employed to secure signatures. Certainly at first a proper discrimination was exercised in the admission of names; Henderson's own statement is that the signatures of prominent men, reckoned unsound, were rejected. But it also cannot be denied that the eager multitude used threats and violence to those who withheld their adhesion, and thus the leaders were naturally blamed for the indiscretions of their followers.

Only one or two strongholds of episcopacy

\* "History of the Old Greyfriars Church," by W. M. Bryce, with chapter on the Subscribing of the National Covenant in 1638, by D. Hay Fleming, LL.D.



SIGNING THE NATIONAL COVENANT IN GREYFRIARS CHURCHYARD

BY W. HOLE, R.S.A.

Mr Hole's masterly picture may not be historically correct, but the artist's conception of Alexander Henderson is so good that it is worth reproducing





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held back from the new movement. Some of the Glasgow ministers and professors refused their assent, nor could any reasoning move them. St. Andrews and Aberdeen were equally stubborn in their resistance, and the doctors in the latter university wrote strongly against the Covenant. These isolated instances served only to accentuate the unanimity in the country at large, however, and the immediate result was seen in the flight to England of Spottiswoode and several other bishops. Meantime, for the enlightenment of those outside the movement, a "Second Historical Information" was drawn up by the Covenanters, in which a plain and unvarnished account of the recent proceedings was given. Early in March deputations were sent to deal with the backsliding towns. They signally failed to impress the professors of Aberdeen and Glasgow, but Henderson, who headed the deputation to St. Andrews on 6th March, was able to report that not a burgess had refused to subscribe.\*

Rent as it was by conflicting factions, the Privy Council showed its utter incapacity to deal with the new situation that had arisen. One thing they were agreed on, and that was that concessions would have to be made. This was the text of their every communication to Charles, and it was backed up by the personal entreaties of those who went to Whitehall. Unfortunately for all concerned, Charles took a diametrically opposite view of the situation. To him the

\* Baillie, Letter 6.

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Covenanters were flat rebels, to be relentlessly crushed. By so acting, he would teach a sharp object-lesson to those of his English subjects who were beginning to chafe at sundry exercises of the royal prerogative. Besides, he had at his ear the fugitive bishops, who never ceased to remind him that he was being flouted by an inconsiderable minority of the Scottish nation, a minority which would dwindle away at the first display of the mailed fist.

Charles therefore resolved on war, but in order to gain time for his preparations, he decided to send a commissioner to Scotland. His choice fell on James, Marquis of Hamilton, who to the best of his ability played the dissembling part assigned by his royal master. Unfortunately for him, however, the Covenanters were well served at Court, and were able to checkmate every move as soon as it was made. Even before he came down, Baillie knew that his party was threatened "with a bloody onset by the navy on the east coast, by an Irish army on the west, by all the power that three marquises in Scotland and the Popish party can make with the north of England." \*

Under these circumstances, it was a profoundly suspicious Scotland that greeted Hamilton on his arrival on 5th June. In order to make the position of the Covenanters perfectly unambiguous, Henderson drew up a document entitled "Articles for the present Peace of the Kirk and Kingdom of Scotland." † Couched in similar

\* Baillie, Letter 6.

† Rothes, "Relation," p. 100.

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terms to his "Information for the People," which had appeared in March, it demanded discharge of the obnoxious books; the abolition of the High Commission; freedom from the Perth Articles; a yearly General Assembly; and a Parliament.

It would be tedious and unprofitable to dwell at length on the tortuous events of the next four months; but for a proper understanding of our subject some points must be noted. Hamilton arrived, primed with instructions, the futility of which had been pointed out by more than one candid friend. Every contingency had been carefully discussed with the King, and the upshot was as follows:—Hamilton was to offer a pardon to all who should renounce the Covenant within six weeks; he was to continue the High Commission, but its composition and powers were to be remodelled; he was to suspend the Five Articles of Perth, but to refuse all petitions against them; he was also to suspend the Service-Book; while any who protested against the royal proclamations were to be treated as rebels.

Entering Edinburgh on 9th June, Hamilton was treated to a demonstration in force by the Covenanters who mustered on Leith Links to the number of about seven hundred. From that date onwards they gave him no peace. On the 12th a deputation, which included the indefatigable Henderson, pressed for the calling of a free General Assembly and a Parliament, and proved for the Commissioner's satisfaction, that the English Reformation was very far inferior to that

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in Scotland. On the 13th we find the same deputation again urging an immediate answer to their demands, and high words took place between Henderson and Hamilton on the legality of protestations, the former speaking "somewhat to dissuade any exceptions at the Protestation."\* Nevertheless, Baillie tells us† that, on the following Sunday, Henderson preached before the Commissioner, and thereafter conferred with him at length in private.

Matters had now reached an absolute *impasse*, and Hamilton, resorting to procrastination, changed his ground practically every day. In his possession was a recent letter from Charles, saying he would die rather than yield to their impertinent and damnable demands, but, notwithstanding, the game of bluff went blithely on. In order to remove some of Hamilton's pretended scruples, Henderson drew up a supplication‡ entitled "Reasons against the rendering of our sworn Covenant and subscribed Confession of Faith," in which he cleared the Confession from the charge of combination against law and authority.

On 30th June proclamation was made of the return of the Council and Session to Edinburgh, and on the following day Hamilton left for London to secure the concessions demanded by the Covenanters. Changing his mind with suspicious rapidity he suddenly returned, and on 4th July published his original proclamation.

\* Rothes, "Relation," pp. 144-5.

† Letter 7.

‡ Stevenson, "History," ii. 345.



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He was probably encouraged to act thus on the strength of recent dispatches from Charles, which stated that the preparations for the invasion of Scotland were approaching completion. Acting on the principle that the strong man armed keepeth his house in the peace, the Covenanters had previously made sure of the Castles of Edinburgh and Stirling, while also importing arms from Holland. It will thus be seen that both sides already recognised that war was almost inevitable.

Far from aiding Charles's cause, this last piece of disgusting hypocrisy alienated so many of the loyalists in the Privy Council that Hamilton was fain to tear up the obnoxious proclamation. Convinced that he had "no hope in the world of doing good without coming to blows," the Commissioner departed in earnest for London on the 10th of July. In his absence a determined effort was made to convert the recalcitrant Aberdonians, and Henderson was one of those who went north for that purpose.\* Fairness bids us mention that they got as good as they gave. They were but coldly welcomed, and on the night of their arrival, the local professors sent them a number of "ensnaring demands," hoping by this means to render their journey fruitless. Nothing loath, the Covenanters accepted the challenge, but they were next refused the use of any of the city pulpits. Thereupon Henderson and his friend Cant preached to large audiences in the open air, while conclusive answers were

\* Spalding, "History," pp. 57-8.



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given to the fourteen questions penned by the professors, one of which asked how they could subscribe the Covenant without the King's command. "Whereunto," as Spalding tells us, "Henderson made such answers as pleased him best." \* But few converts were gained, though Baillie tries hard to put a good front on the affair; and the only visible fruits of the visit were the collection of pamphlets, many of them from Henderson's able pen, which the disputation called forth. †

On 10th August Hamilton returned to Edinburgh with a fresh list of instructions, and a few concessions wrung with difficulty from the obstinate monarch. The negative confession of 1560 was to be revived and pressed in favour of the existing pact, in the hope of creating a diversion in the King's favour. Should matters progress favourably, an Assembly was promised, but hedged about with so many limitations as to be practically useless. For instance, no layman was to have a vote in choosing the clerical representatives from the various presbyteries; and when met, it must not meddle with matters determined by Acts of Parliament, unless by remonstrance and petition. The first condition well-nigh caused a split in the covenanting ranks. To the younger generation of ministers, the legality of elders sitting in Assembly was dubious, and this was likely to have proved a

\* See also Baillie, Letter 8.

† Baillie says that 500 signatures were gathered in the town, as well as those of some 50 ministers of the district, but this is doubtful.

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serious stumbling-block. Fortunately, however, men like Henderson were well versed in ecclesiastical lore, and after a time all yielded to their arguments, though, as Baillie tells us, "some against their stomach."\* Considering that no layman had voted in a Church court for well-nigh forty years, their hesitation was not to be wondered at. To Hamilton, however, their decision came as a severe blow, and he now appears finally to have recognised that all attempts to break up the compact ranks of the Covenanters were foredoomed to end in failure. Accordingly, he begged their leaders to desist from any immediate action which might be to their prejudice, and departed for London, promising to return at latest by 20th September, with the King's permission for all they asked.

He found Charles between the devil and the deep sea. Unforeseen difficulties had arisen, and the plans for the invasion of Scotland were far from complete. On the other hand, the King could ill stomach the concessions which Hamilton assured him would have to be granted. Under the circumstances there was nothing for it but temporary submission, and Charles, draining the full cup of his humiliation, subscribed the negative Covenant of 1581, and authorised Hamilton to call a General Assembly and a Parliament.

On 17th September Hamilton reappeared in Edinburgh, and on the 22nd the long-looked-for proclamation at last appeared. A General

\* Letter 8.

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Assembly was indicted, to be held at Glasgow on 21st November, and a Parliament, to be held in Edinburgh on 15th May of the following year. Along with this, notice was given that the Court of High Commission, the Service-Book, the Canons, and the Perth Articles were suspended *sine die*. All were furthermore required to follow the King and his Council, by subscribing the Covenant of 1581. A protestation to this last was read by Johnston of Warriston on 24th September, and I agree with Professor Masson who, in attributing its authorship to Henderson, says:—"It was a long document, but is, both in spirit and in expression, one of the finest to be found among the uncouth Scottish records of that period."\* The new rival for popular favour was industriously hawked up and down the country, but in the end only some twenty-eight thousand subscribed, of which number twelve thousand hailed from the Episcopalian counties of Aberdeen and Banff.

\* "Life of Milton," ii. 33.

## IV

### The Glasgow Assembly

THE attention of all Scotland was now directed towards the preparations for the forthcoming Assembly. As it was intended to revert to the pristine purity of pre-episcopalian times, the Tables had many an anxious consultation as to the proper constitution of the Court. They even took the step of sending down letters to the various presbyteries, instructing them as to the number of commissioners they were entitled to send, and fixing a date for their election. In addition, private circulars were sent to those who could be trusted, reminding them of the desirability of choosing those whose covenanting zeal could not be gainsaid. Especially were they to avoid selecting ministers who were not sound in doctrine, and, above all, chapter men and such as read the Liturgy were to be carefully excluded.

The effect of these skilful advices was profound, when the first nominations for the Assembly came to be made. In vain did the Court party strive to secure the return of such as were well-disposed to episcopacy; only in one or two isolated cases were the instructions of the Tables disobeyed. That a certain amount of coercion, direct and indirect, was used in manning the

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Assembly cannot be denied. In the then state of public opinion it was inevitable, but when all is said and done, it hardly justified the loud outcry made by the partisans of the King and the bishops. After all, very little "packing" was needed, and we may regard the greater part of the counter-agitation as the last resort of a party which was beaten before it took the field.

One other matter had to be settled before the Assembly met. It had been resolved that, come what might, the bishops should be brought to the bar of the House. It was known that the King was pushing on his preparations for an invasion in the spring; and, therefore, the Covenanters determined that, while they had the chance, they would make a clean sweep of episcopacy. As Baillie bluntly put it: \* "No kind of crime which can be gotten proven of a bishop will now be concealed." We cannot but reprobate the methods adopted by the Covenanting leaders in their zeal against these unhappy prelates. Had they attacked them only in virtue of their office, all would have been well; but no charge was too scandalous and abominable to receive the official *imprimatur* of the party. For obvious reasons, the charge could not be lodged with the Moderator and Clerk of the detested Assembly of 1618; the Commissioner, who was next appealed to, flatly declined to take action, as did the judges in the civil courts. The Presbytery of Edinburgh, however, having no such scruples, received a

\* Letter 8.



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long charge drawn up by representatives of the several Tables, who were not themselves to be members of Assembly. This preposterous and indecent libel was referred to the Assembly, and orders were issued that it should be read from every pulpit within the bounds of the presbytery. Naturally enough, the aggrieved bishops were at once in arms, and, in addition to protesting, they published a declinature of jurisdiction against what, to them, was an Assembly only in name.

The long-looked-for day at last drew nigh, and on Friday, 16th November, a great crowd of westland Covenanters came flocking into Glasgow. On the following day another large contingent arrived from the eastern part of the country, and it was seen that the accommodation of the city would be taxed to the uttermost. As arranged by the Tables, each presbytery sent two or three ministers and one elder as their representatives to the Assembly, the elders consisting mainly of nobles, or other persons of good estate in the country. When we remember that these brought in their train a great throng of friends and supporters, and that many presbyteries sent three or four assessors to guide the deliberations of their representatives, we can form some idea of the resources which the Covenanters had at their disposal.

Late on the Saturday afternoon the Commissioner arrived with his train, and cordial greetings were exchanged on both sides. During the next three days both parties were engaged

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in making their final preparations. Curiously enough, chief discussion took place as to the part Henderson was to play in the forthcoming proceedings. Baillie tells us something of what went on at these private conclaves, and incidentally pays Henderson a handsome tribute by saying: "He was incomparably the ablest man of us all for all things."\* The difficulty was whether he should be made Moderator or Clerk, as it was felt that his debating talents would be lost were he to be assigned the former position. But in the end, finding they had no other man with "parts requisite to the present moderation," the Covenanters decided that Henderson should fill the chair. Their choice of a clerk fell on Archibald Johnston of Warriston, and as matters transpired, no two better appointments could possibly have been made.

On Wednesday, 21st November, the Assembly, which can justly be called epoch-making, held its first session in the Cathedral Church. So great was the throng of those wishing to attend that scenes unworthy of such an occasion took place, and Baillie is forced to confess† that "we might learn from Canterbury, yea from the Pape, yea from the Turks or Pagans, modesty and manners." Whatever its faults, the gathering could not be called unrepresentative, including as it did 140 ministers, 2 lay professors, and 98 ruling elders. With great difficulty, places were found for all. In his state chair sat Hamilton, the King's

\* Letter 10.

† *Idem.*

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Commissioner, and surrounding him were the members of the Privy Council, including Argyll, who was soon to throw off an unnatural allegiance, and join the party with whose interests his destiny was bound up. A little table was set in the middle, forewent the Commissioner, for the Moderator and Clerk. Down the centre ran another table, at which the nobles and barons who were members of Assembly found places. Behind them were ranged the ministers; while from the two galleries a huge crowd of spectators, including many of the nobility, watched the shifting scene below.

As the oldest minister in the church, Mr. John Bell preached the introductory sermon, and after the usual devotional exercises, he formally constituted the Assembly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The remainder of the sederunt was occupied with the handing in of commissions, these being received by Mr. Thomas Sandilands, who occupied the Clerk's seat.

On the Thursday a great dispute took place between the Commissioner and the members. At the start of the proceedings, a leet of names for the Moderatorship was presented, but the Commissioner argued that before doing anything else, they should examine the validity of the commissions in order that none who were not qualified should vote. This proposal, which paved the way for an endless series of disputes, was vehemently resisted by Henderson and others with much subtle, accurate, and passionate

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pleading.\* Neither side seemed disposed to yield; but in the end Hamilton compromised by protesting his right to object to any doubtful commission. Further, he protested formally that the nomination of a moderator should be in no-wise prejudicial to the Lords of the clergy, their office, dignity, or any privilege which law or custom had given them. This the Covenanters capped by affirming their right to discuss all complaints against the pretended bishops. After much bickering, the way was at last cleared for the election of the moderator. The names of Mr. John Ker, Mr. John Row, Mr. J. Bonner, Mr. William Livingstone, and Mr. Alexander Henderson were submitted to the House. As was expected, Henderson was elected with almost complete unanimity, and in accordance with custom made "a pretty harangue." In noting that the day's proceedings ended with prayer by the moderator, Baillie remarks that among Henderson's other good parts, that was one, a faculty of grave, good, and zealous prayer, according to the matter in hand; "which he exercised without fagging to the last day of our meeting." The next few days were occupied in trying the commissions, and call for little note. From the printed minutes which remain, we see that Henderson had an admirable facility for dealing with the various matters which came up for discussion. Those who differed from him in opinion were treated firmly but courteously. Only once, when Argyll proffered some frivolous

\* Baillie, Letter 10.



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objections, did his "natural choler" get the better of him, but Lord Loudon saved the situation with a ready jest.

It had never been absent from the minds of the Covenanting leaders that at any moment the Commissioner might see fit to dissolve the Assembly on the grounds that it was exceeding its prerogative. That all arrangements had been made in the event of such a climax taking place is perfectly clear; but none the less, it was with some trepidation that the members assembled for their seventh session on 28th November.\* Now that the ground was cleared, the Assembly determined to begin its real business by dealing effectively with the recalcitrant bishops. The examination of their declinature led to a lengthy and learned discussion in which the chief protagonists were Henderson and Dr. Balcanquhal, who was later rewarded for his apostasy with the Deanery of Durham. Henderson closed the argument by asking the Assembly if they found themselves competent judges of the bishops, notwithstanding their declinature of judgment. No sooner was the question put than the Commissioner sprang to his feet, and announced that while granting much, there was a limit which he could not exceed, and the trial of the bishops as such must not go on. He was immediately followed by Henderson, who, in a speech of great dignity and moderation, declared that while rendering the utmost loyalty to the King, they

\* For an account of the proceedings of this day see specially Peterkin's "Records."



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must also let the God, by whom kings reign, have His own place and prerogative. "Sir, ye have spoken as a good Christian and dutiful subject," was the spontaneous interjection of the Commissioner, who asked shortly afterwards, with visible emotion, that the question before the House might be deferred. With unflinching purpose, Henderson continued the immediate business, and the discussion was taken up by Rothes and Loudon. After making several moves to depart, the Commissioner rose and, solemnly discharging the Assembly in the King's name, left the building with his retinue of Privy Councillors.

To encourage the weaker brethren in this supreme crisis, Henderson said a few words of encouragement, and called on some other leaders to do the same. Thus ended a solemn and memorable scene which drew tears from the eyes of actors and spectators alike. Be the issue what it might, the gauntlet had been flung down, and the parties now faced each other, prepared to act the first scene in the inevitable tragedy. Only some three or four waverers from the district of Angus dissented from the decision to continue the Assembly till its affairs were settled. Having set their hands to the plough, the members met on the next day as if nothing untoward had taken place, and proceeded with the business. An unexpected but welcome event then occurred, which led the devout Covenanters to feel that their actions were approved by the Supreme Being in whose name they were

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convoked. Argyll, who had just succeeded to his title, and who was now about thirty years of age, suddenly appeared in the Assembly, declaring his complete adherence to the principles of the Covenant, and announcing his intention to identify himself with any course they might take in the future. The moral effect of such an accession cannot be over-estimated, for the Marquis brought the lustre of an ancient name, and a mind which has been described as the most statesmanlike of his time. When we remember that he could bring five thousand claymores into the field, and that he possessed the powers of an absolute monarch in his own domains, we can understand part of the exultation of the Covenanters.

The Assembly sat for three weeks and a day, after Hamilton had dissolved it in the King's name, and during that time episcopacy, thing and name, was abolished, as far as it was humanly possible to do so. The six Assemblies which had been held since 1606 were all annulled, chiefly on the ground that the rights and privileges of the members had been tampered with. The Canons, the Liturgy, the Book of Ordination, and the High Commission Court were all condemned. Eight of the bishops were excommunicated, and all were deposed. The Assembly also declared that Episcopacy and the Five Articles of Perth had been abjured in the Covenant; and all who had not already subscribed were required to sign, with a declaration to that effect.

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It was thought fitting that the tedious and unedifying business of condemning the bishops should be concluded with all the dignity and ceremony at the Assembly's command. But the duty was repugnant to Henderson, and on this one occasion he seems to have been overcome by the responsibility of his office. "Evil will had he to undertake preaching on so short advertisement; yet there was no remeid; all laid it on him." Choosing as his text, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," he preached at considerable length a sermon in which eloquence and learning were happily blended. Thereafter, amid a hushed awe, he pronounced sentence in a very dreadful and grave manner. It was an occasion never to be forgotten by those present, and doubtless many besides Baillie pondered over the power of the Most High and the mutability of human fortunes.

On the following day the Assembly turned with relief to the consideration of less weighty matters. The church at St. Andrews was vacant, owing to the deposition of Mr. George Wishart, and the commissioner from that town announced that they had set their eyes on Mr. Alexander Henderson. But the city of Edinburgh had also, and not for the first time, cast covetous eyes on the Moderator, and they now claimed priority of right. For his own part, Henderson assured the Assembly that he desired no change. For twenty-four years he had been minister of Leuchars, and doubtless he had grown to love

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that pleasant corner of Fife. "I am now growing an old, withered, and dry tree," he said, "and it is a pity to transport such an one, lest it bring forth no fruit." But though Henderson chose thus to depreciate his own powers, others thought differently, and, as it afterwards was seen, they were right. Were he to accept a call elsewhere, Henderson would have preferred the town in whose university he had studied and taught in his younger days. However, when the question was put to the vote, Edinburgh successfully maintained its right to this ornament of the Church; and we, who can read the book of the past, recognise the propriety that one who was still to do so much for his Church should be honoured by the capital city of the country.\*

That Henderson was naturally disposed to shrink from the world, and find his true pleasure in a studious and secluded life, is proved again and again in his own writings and sermons. Yet he appeared to his enemies as a raging lion, seeking ever to subvert and destroy. Writing to Hamilton early in December, Laud remarks: "Mr. Alexander Henderson, who went all this while for a quiet and calm-spirited man, hath shewed himself a most violent and passionate man, and a moderator without moderation. Truly, my Lord, never did I see any man of that

\* Henderson was elected by the Town Council of Edinburgh on 4th May, 1638, but was not released from Leuchars till 16th December. Dean Hannay was deposed from the charge of the High Kirk on 1st January, 1639, and Henderson was inducted on the 10th ("Dic. Nat. Biog.").



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humour yet, but he was deep-dyed in some violence or other, and it would have been a wonder to me if Henderson had held free."

The injustice and one-sidedness of this criticism cannot but strike anyone who reads of Henderson's actions. His was essentially a statesman-like disposition, and he was completely free from that sharpness of temper which marred the character of his old teacher, Andrew Melville. In an age when wrangling over points of doctrine was so frequent, and where the expedient of public debate was so freely resorted to, the advantage of having a leader who could be relied on not to lose his temper in an emergency was a great one indeed.

On 20th December, the last session of the epoch-making Assembly was held, and by way of epilogue to the drama of the second Reformation Henderson delivered the customary closing address. It was an earnest and devout acknowledgment of the goodness of God, and was couched in conciliatory language. The last sentence which tradition declares him to have uttered was pregnant with meaning, and had an almost prophetic ring in view of subsequent happenings: "We have now cast down the walls of Jericho; let him that rebuildeth them beware of the curse of Hiel the Bethelite."

When we next meet Henderson and his fellow Covenanters, ploughshares have been beaten into swords, and civil war is abroad in the land.



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**I**MMEDIATELY after the close of the Glasgow Assembly, both sides prepared wholeheartedly for the inevitable clash of arms. During the autumn and early winter much had already been done. In September, Alexander Leslie, fresh from his triumphs under Gustavus Adolphus, had returned to his native land and settled in Fife. Early embracing the principles of the Covenant, he became the trusted adviser of Henderson and his party, and it was mainly due to his skilful arrangements that the Covenanting preparations were made with such complete success.

Charles, on his part, had been in close communication with Hamilton, and he wrote in December that, by February or March following, he would be in a position to reassert his authority. He followed this up by exacting an oath from all Scotsmen at court, that they would renounce the Assembly and the Covenant, and promise the King their full assistance against the rebels. On 26th January, 1639, letters were sent out to all the shires, commanding the English nobles and gentry to join the King at York by the 1st of April. Charles’s plans were now maturing. An army of 30,000 was to be led by himself;

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Carlisle and Berwick were to be garrisoned ; a fleet was to be sent into the Firth of Forth ; a force under Hamilton was to co-operate with Huntly in the north ; the Earl of Antrim was to invade Argyllshire ; and Wentworth, with a body of Irish troops, was to enter the Firth of Clyde.

During the spring months Scotland resembled an armed camp. In every village and hamlet, scarred veterans, fresh from the Thirty Years' War, drilled the willing rustics in the use of pike and musket. That the sinews of war should not be lacking, collectors were appointed to levy contributions in every shire, and money poured into the Covenanting treasury. Nor was this energy confined to laymen, for the rank and file of the clergy seconded with their exhortations the martial zeal of their flocks, and in not a few cases prepared themselves to carry arms in the righteous struggle.

The older and cooler spirits, such as Henderson, were equally active in another direction. They had always realised that it was their duty to vindicate their actions to the outer world, and on this occasion the necessity was more pressing than ever. It was quite well known that England did not altogether approve of the King's arbitrary actions, and with a view to creating a more cordial understanding between the two peoples, the Covenanters had circulated a few "printed sheets." Retailed through the mediumship of pedlars, these attempts to "vindicate their intentions and actions from the unjust calumnies of their enemies" found their way

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into the very quarters where they were most likely to have effect.

This scheme, chiefly engineered by Henderson, was met with a counter-stroke by the King, who issued a Declaration on 27th February, “to inform the Kingdom of England of the seditious practices of some in Scotland, seeking to overthrow his regal power under the false pretence of religion.” The skilled dialectical pen of Henderson was once more invoked, the result being “The Remonstrance of the Nobility, &c., within the Kingdom of Scotland, vindicating them and their proceedings from the crimes wherewith they are charged by the late proclamation in England.” These “dainty sheets,” written by one versed in every art of the pamphleteer, had such an effect that, over all England, “we (the Covenanters) began to be much more pitied than before, and our enraged party, the bishops, to be the more detested.” \*

Henderson’s services were next required, not to attack opponents, but to calm uneasy doubts in the minds of his own followers. The doctrine of non-resistance to the supreme ruler of the State was religiously and fanatically held by presbyter and episcopalian alike. At such a time, however, when the conventions of ages were in the melting-pot, the principle of *salus populi, suprema lex* had perforce to be adopted, and the duty of expounding this new creed was laid on Henderson. It is not one of his best performances, having been done in haste and

\* Baillie, Letter 11.

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“somewhat against the hair”—so much so, indeed, that he refused to let it be printed. A pirated edition was afterwards brought out, however, together with a hostile commentary.

Confident in the righteousness of their cause, the Scots resolved not to enter into any offensive or defensive alliances with foreign powers, thinking that such a course might savour of a leaning to the broken reeds of Egypt. By March events had moved apace. The castles of Edinburgh, Dumbarton, Douglas, and Dalkeith fell into the hands of the Covenanters practically without a shot being fired, while in view of the probable invasion, Leith was promptly fortified. Recognising that their greatest danger lay in an attack by Huntly from the north, Montrose and Leslie proceeded thither with a force of seven or eight thousand men. Here, too, complete success attended their efforts, and soon Huntly and his son were safely lodged in Edinburgh Castle.

Meantime, the mighty armament, with which Charles intended to vindicate his outraged authority, shrank like the summer brooks. The English nation as a whole viewed the invasion with indifference, indeed, with disfavour. Early in April the King was at York, and here he remained while his half-hearted army was being got together.

On 1st May Hamilton sailed into the Forth according to arrangement, but the impotence of his 5000 raw levies was at once recognised, and after several futile attempts to overawe the Covenanters by proclamations which



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could not be enforced, he was fain to withdraw to Berwick with his sickly and diseased troops. Charles had meanwhile advanced to Newcastle, and by the 28th of May was at Berwick with a force of 8000 men.

In Scotland nothing was being left undone which might aid the Covenanting cause. The leaders, while making every preparation for war, were still assiduous in their attempts to conciliate the King. An urgent supplication for an honourable settlement was sent through the Earl of Essex, whose sympathies were largely with the Scots. On this coming to naught, another was drawn up by Henderson, in terms so submissive that some were not pleased, “ fearing lest the baseness of it should be imputed to our quaking for the approaching of the King’s arms.”\* Submissive or no, it was entrusted, practically unchanged, to the hands of Dr. Moseley, Vicar of Newark, who had been visiting Edinburgh on peace-making intent.

On the 18th of May Leslie, now *Generalissimo* of the Scots, issued orders for the mobilisation of the forces, and by leisured stages an advance was made to the Borders, camp being pitched at Dunglass, on the confines of East Lothian and Berwickshire. On the 23rd Sir Thomas Hope, the Lord-Advocate, noted in his diary† “ that Mr. Alexander Henrysoun with Mr. Archibald Johnstoun raid to the bound Rod ”—both probably travelling in their respective capa-

\* Baillie, Letter 11.

† Page 97 (Bannatyne Club ed.).



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cities of Moderator and Clerk to the General Assembly.

On the 30th of the month, Charles, who had with him about 20,000 men, took up his position at the Birks, a piece of flat ground on the south bank of the Tweed, about three miles from Berwick, and some twelve miles from Dunse Law. Matters were not going too well with the Scots at this moment, and on 3rd June Henderson and others "bethoght and bethoght the whole afternoon upon the present necessities of the army, and were forfohten with the consideration of them." On the same day, a brush took place between the opposing forces at Kelso, in consequence of which Leslie raised his camp and advanced to Dunse Law on the 5th of June.

Only a few miles now separated Charles from his aggrieved subjects, whom he could plainly see through his spy-glass. It has been contemptuously noted by some historians that the Scots were an unkempt and ragged army, but none the less we know from contemporary evidence that the English were far from eager to come to blows with them.

The worthy Baillie has given us a most graphic description\* of the Covenanting camp as it appeared at this critical time: "Our hill was garnished on the top, towards the south and east, with our mounted cannon, well near to the number of forty, great and small. Our regiment lay on the sides of the hill almost

\* Letter 11.

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round about. . . . The crowners lay in canvas lodges, high and wide; their captains about them in lesser ones; the soldiers about all in huts of timber, covered with divot or straw. Our crowners, for the most part, were noblemen . . . ; our captains, for the most part, barons; our gentlemen of good note; our lieutenants most of old soldiers, who had served over sea in good charges. Every company had, fleeing at the captain’s tent-door, a brave new colour, stamped with the Scottish arms, and this motto, *For Christ’s Crown and Covenant*, in golden letters. Our General had a brave, royal tent; but it was not set up. . . . He lay at the foot of the hill, in the Castle. The councils of war were kept daily in the Castle; the ecclesiastick meetings in Rothes’ large tent.” To every regiment was attached a clergyman, whose business was to pray and preach for the encouragement of the troops. As a result, “had you lent your ear in the morning, or especially at the evening, and heard in the tents the sound of some singing psalms, some praying, and some reading Scripture, you would have been refreshed.” Unfortunately, there was swearing and cursing and brawling in some quarters, “whereat we were grieved.”

The Earl of Stamford, who visited the camp during the subsequent negotiations, and dined with General Leslie, was pleased and surprised at what he saw.\* On his return he announced that their presbyters, Hindersham (Alexander

\* Leslie’s “Life and Campaigns.”

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Henderson) and others, defamed among us for so many incendiaries and *boutefeus*, are, every mother's son (their carbines at their backs, swords and pair of pistols at their girdles laid aside), holy and blessed men, of admirable, transcendent, and seraphical learning, and say grace longer and better than our campestral chaplains that ride before our regiments taking tobacco.

On both sides there was obvious desire to avoid a conflict. When it came to the point, the Covenanters were loath to raise their hands against their natural sovereign; while Charles knew that the temper of his followers was none too certain. Were hostilities to be precipitated, red war would be let loose in the land, and no man might tell the outcome. It was, therefore, with feelings of great relief that the Scots listened to the unofficial suggestion that the King would not be averse to having a conference with some of their leaders. As one who was present eloquently puts it : \* “ We had no other end of our wars; we sought no crowns; we aimed at no lands and honours as our party; we desired but to keep our own in the service of our prince, as our ancestors had done; we loved no new masters. Had our throne been void, and our voices sought for the filling of Fergus' chair, we would have died ere any other had sat down on that fatal marble but Charles alone.”

With these pacific intentions, the Covenanters dispatched the Earl of Dunfermline to the royal

\* Baillie, Letter 11.

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camp with a short supplication asking that some worthy man be appointed to discuss the points at issue. On Saturday, 8th June, a message came from Charles appointing six commissioners to repair to the royal camp on the Monday at 8 A.M. Some trouble arising over the matter of a safe-conduct for the deputation, it was not till Tuesday, 11th, that the negotiations were actually opened. The Scottish commissioners were Lords Rothes, Loudon, and Dunfermline, with Sir William Douglas, Alexander Henderson, and Archibald Johnston, clerk of the Assembly.

Discussing the outcome of this conference, Bishop Burnet remarks : \* “ Some made another observation, though of less moment, yet not unpleasant, upon Mr. Henderson—that it was strange to see a Churchman, who had acted so vigorously against bishops for their meddling in civil affairs, made a commissioner for this treaty, and sign a paper so *purely civil*.”

On the first day, Henderson and Johnston did not go with the rest of the commissioners, who were received by the King in person. The Covenanting demands were terse and comprehensive. They asked the King to ratify in Parliament the proceedings of the Glasgow Assembly ; to assent to the principle that matters, civil and ecclesiastical, should be determined in frequent Parliaments and Assemblies ; to dismiss his forces, and to surrender “ all excommunicate persons, incendiaries, and informers to their just punishment.” Charles demurred,

\* “ History,” p. 143.



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and adjourned the meeting till the 13th, not, however, without commenting on the absence of the two clerical representatives.

Accordingly, these two ventured to attend the next meeting. Chief discussion centred on the "grounds" on which the former arguments had been based, and Henderson told the King of three things that stirred up the people's hearts. "First, the pressing of such books, so full of innovations of religion and superstitions. (2) Their hearing of the prelates and their adherents at home to maintain in schools and preach in pulpits many Arminian and Popish tenets. (3) The reading of manifold books printed in England *cum privilegio*, all full of popery and Arminianism. The King then fell on his authority to change all things that were not *de fide* as matters of discipline and government. Mr. Alexander cleared that albeit they were not *de fide* as articles of the creeds, yet they were *de fide* as *credenda*, being warranted by the Word of God, and as in fundamental points *ignorantia in superfundamenta error in circa fundamenta, obstinacia* against the light of the Word is a great sin, and as my Lord Rothes instanced the denial of David's cutting of Goliath's head, and we show that by the Book of Discipline and Acts of Assembly, the government of this Kirk by pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons was grounded on God's Word, and unchangeable." \*

This cumbersome and involved argument is

\* Warriston's "Diary," p. 79.



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given at length as being typical of the methods employed, and we have Baillie’s authority for stating that the King was much delighted with Henderson’s discourse.\* In finely-spun dialectics, Henderson could always hold his own, as the following example shows. On Charles inquiring if he were responsible to other than God for his actions, Henderson replied that he was. “Then,” answered Charles, “David was mistaken who said, ‘Against thee only have I sinned.’” Without hesitation, Henderson emended the text as follows:—“Against thee *principally* have I sinned.”

Once again, Charles delayed his answer to the petition, and adjourned the conference till the Saturday, having first propounded three queries to the Scottish delegates. These asked whether they acknowledged the King to have the sole indiction of Assemblies, whether he had a negative vote in the Assembly, and whether he had the power of raising the Assembly.

When Saturday came round, Charles was in a more accommodating frame of mind, with the result that the Scots “liked the King, and he likewise was the more enamoured of us, especially with Henderson and Loudon.”† The outcome was that Charles presented the Scots with a declaration in which he virtually granted all their desires. On the Monday one or two points, still at issue, were vigorously debated, neither side wishing to yield, but a compromise

\* Letter 11.

† Baillie, Letter 11.

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was eventually reached, and on the afternoon of Tuesday, 18th June, the treaty, subsequently known as the Pacification of Berwick, was signed in the royal tent and the First Bishop's war was at an end.

Among the conditions laid down in the treaty were the immediate disbanding of the Covenanting forces ; the surrender of castles, forts, regalia, &c., to the King ; and the cessation of all meetings not sanctioned by Act of Parliament. Charles, on his part, was to withdraw all his ships and armaments. From an ecclesiastical point of view, the Scots gained practically all their desires. It is true that the King would not ratify the Acts of the Glasgow Assembly, but he announced that a free General Assembly was to meet on the 6th of August following, and a Parliament on the 20th of the same month.

On neither side was there complete satisfaction. Among the Scots, some thought that those who concluded the treaty "took too much upon them," and it was ultimately recognised that at best it was a temporary expedient, from which little could be hoped.

Nor was it long before causes of friction arose. Contrary to his promise, Charles maintained strong garrisons in Berwick and Carlisle. The Scots, again, were slow to dissolve the "Tables," and they had actually renewed Leslie's commission. Amid these unmistakable storm-signs, the preparations for the Assembly went on. On 1st July the customary proclamation of date was made, and riots broke out when it was dis-

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covered that the deposed prelates were invited to attend.

On 16th July Charles summoned fourteen of the leading Covenanters to Berwick to explain matters, but only six turned up. After several stormy interviews, they were dismissed, and the whole fourteen were ordered to return on the 25th. Vague doubts and fears filled the minds of the deputation, one of whom was Alexander Henderson. True, they made a pretence of setting out for the Border, but the Edinburgh mob, jealous of its favourites, turned their horses’ heads at the Water Gate, and Loudon and Lindsay, who alone were allowed to proceed, had to make the best excuses they could to the irate monarch. On 3rd August Charles returned to London, and on the 12th the Assembly was opened at Edinburgh.

Charles had originally intended to be present in person at the deliberations of the Assembly, but making the recent riots his excuse, he asked Hamilton again to act as his deputy. But the chastened Hamilton wisely refused, and the Commissionership was ultimately entrusted to Traquair, the Lord-Treasurer. The fathers and brethren met a week later than the date originally fixed, and Henderson opened the proceedings with the customary Moderator’s sermon. On its conclusion, he addressed the Commissioner and the members of the House in words which showed how far removed was his mind from those fanatical tendencies so apparent in some of his brethren: “As for your Grace, His Majesty’s

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Commissioner, we beseech you to see that Cæsar has his own; but let not Cæsar have what is due to God and belongs to Him. God has exalted your Grace to many high places within these few years, and more especially now. Be thankful, and labour to exalt Christ's throne. Some are exalted like Haman—some like Mordecai. . . . And to you, right honourable and right worshipful members of this Assembly, go on in your zeal constantly. Surely it shall be refreshment to you and your children, that you should have lived when the light of the Gospel was almost extinguished, and now to see it quickened again. After all these troubles, with a holy moderation, go on; for zeal is a good servant but an ill master; like a ship that has a full sail and wants a rudder. We have need of Christian prudence; for you know what ill speeches our adversaries have made upon us. Let it be seen to His Majesty, that this government can very well stand with a monarchical government. Hereby we shall gain His Majesty's favour, and God shall get the glory."

At the outset of the proceedings proper, Henderson reminded the Assembly of the manifold mercies which had been vouchsafed to them. They were now met under the sacred protection of the King, but the need for Divine guidance was as great as ever. In that humble spirit let them go on. At the second session, Henderson, in the exercise of his prerogative, brought forward a list of names for the moderatorial chair. On laying it before the House,



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the Commissioner intervened, and asked that Henderson’s own name be added to the list. To this Henderson replied modestly, and with a quiet humour which was usually lacking in his public utterances. Not to be silenced, Traquair again pressed his request, but this time Henderson firmly refused, remarking that such a step savoured of a constant Moderator—was, indeed, the first step towards episcopacy. “ In truth,” he concluded, “ I have not a mind to be a bishop.” \*

Although his name was ultimately added to the list, the Assembly, approving of Henderson’s action, elected Mr. David Dickson (or Dick), minister of Irvine, to the place of honour.

The business of this Assembly need not be gone into at length. Suffice it to say that, in all its deliberations, Henderson was the power behind the throne. As the Glasgow Assembly had been annulled by mutual consent, the whole of its acts and decrees were formulated into one comprehensive act, to which Traquair gave the royal assent. Speaking immediately after the event, Henderson, with an emotion which was shared by all present, said: “ It is as joyful a day as ever I was witness unto, and I hope we shall feed upon the sweet fruits hereafter.”

As we turn over the records of this now long-forgotten gathering, we note how Henderson was ever to the fore with wise and prescient suggestions for the welfare of the Church at large. For instance, he proposed the drawing-up of a positive

\* Peterkin, “ Records.”



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confession of faith, wherein the errors expressly condemned by the Church should be set forth, and he also suggested that the doctrine of the Church of Scotland should be made clear. From these and similar motions, we see that Henderson, in addition to being a debater second to none, and an organiser whose services any cause would be proud to command, was also a clear and forceful thinker, with the capacity—often lacking in many—for translating his thoughts into actions. Both the academic and the practical minds were combined in him. As showing his interest in education, and especially in his Alma Mater, St. Andrews, we find him pleading for more professors, and for the more adequate endowment of that University.

The one great blot on the proceedings of this Assembly was that the Covenant was now to be enforced on all and sundry, whatever their religious beliefs. As a recent historian remarks: "The Covenant was no longer a bond of brotherhood, but an instrument of oppression; designed at first to work out civil and religious liberty, it was now to be employed to coerce the consciences, and do violence to the faith of the down-trodden Papists and Prelatists." \* It is no exaggeration to say that the troubles which subsequently led to the downfall of the Covenanting party in Scotland dated from this unhappy act of bigotry.

The kindling zeal of the House was next directed towards the famous "Large Declaration," nominally the work of the King, but in

\* Cunningham, "Church History," ii. 27.

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reality compiled by Dr. Balcanquhal, now Dean of Durham. It is a comparatively accurate account of the events of the previous eighteen months, and certainly did not justify the extraordinary vindictiveness shown even by such moderate minds as that of Henderson. But once kindled, the flame of fanaticism burns fiercely and greedily, sparing no person or thing. However, it was quelled for the present, and the members departed “joyfully and gladly for all the wonders that God had done for this Church and Land.” \*

\* Peterkin, “Records.”

## VI

### The Second Bishops' War

ON 31st August, 1639, the day after the Assembly closed, the Estates met and remained in session till 14th November. At the opening, Henderson preached a sermon on the "end, duty, and usefulness of magistrates." But magistrates can only be useful if they are given the necessary power, and Charles seemed determined to thwart them at every turn. Acting on instructions, Traquair refused to rescind any previous Acts passed in favour of episcopacy, and by a masterly policy of procrastination he effectively prevented the transaction of business. On 24th October, Parliament was prorogued till 14th November, and before that date arrived, it was again prorogued till 2nd June, 1640, despite the formal protestations of the disappointed Covenanters, whose hopes Charles had raised only to damp the more thoroughly.

In order to explain their grievances, Lords Loudon and Dunfermline proceeded twice to London during the course of the winter. During their second visit, in March, 1640, Loudon was suddenly arrested on a charge of high treason and thrown into the Tower, the cause being a letter asking help from France,

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which the Covenanters had drafted but never sent.

On the 13th of April, the famous Short Parliament met, but if Charles had calculated on this treasonable letter arousing their patriotic indignation, he was woefully disappointed. Long ere this incident, however, he had determined to bring the Scots to book for their conduct, a fact of which they were fully cognisant, as they showed by taking concerted means for their defence.

During the early months of 1640 we hear little of Henderson, although we are sure that his alert mind was following with keen attention every new development that occurred. About this time the Town Council of Edinburgh resolved to choose a Rector annually for the University of their city, and to ascertain more precisely the powers of his office, by instructions framed for that end.\* In January, 1640, this honourable office was assigned to Henderson, who was designated "Minister of the Great Kirk of Edinburgh," and he enjoyed the office, by re-election, for five and a half years. A silver mace was to be borne before him on all solemnities, and certain members of the Town Council, ministers of Edinburgh, and professors in the College, were appointed to act as his assessors. His duties included supervision of the conduct of the principal and professors; of the education of youth; and of the revenues. In this last connection, it is interesting to note that, while in

\* The table of duties is given by Grant, "Story of Edinburgh University," i. 206.

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London in the following year, Henderson, probably in his official capacity, had an interview with the King, in which he urged that the universities should be assisted from the rents previously appropriated to the bishops.\* This hint was duly acted on, and Henderson was also the means of obtaining several handsome legacies for the University from private individuals. The internal economy of the University also benefited greatly during his term of office. He was the first to introduce the teaching of Hebrew, and on his suggestion a foreigner was appointed, the General Assembly (also prompted by him) benignantly approving the new departure. For the Colleges he secured a monopoly in the teaching of Greek and Logic, and he also introduced the system of honours classes known as circles.

In his "Story of the University of Edinburgh," Sir Alexander Grant pays a glowing and noteworthy tribute to Henderson as an educationalist.† "In the brief period of his Rectorship Henderson gave an immense stimulus to the College of Edinburgh. He was the ablest educationalist and the man of clearest insight of all who had had to do with the College since its foundation. He saw what was wanted, and had the energy and the tact necessary for securing it. It would have been an inestimable advantage for the Universities of Scotland if his life could have been prolonged for twenty years. In all the

\* Baillie, Letter 25.

† Vol. i. p. 209.



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movements for University and College reform we trace his hand; and with one exception—that of giving a monopoly of Greek and Logic to the Colleges—they were all in the right direction.”

While Scotland was in a state of smouldering wrath, the flames were re-kindled by the announcement that the meeting of Estates was postponed still another month. This was rightly taken as a preliminary declaration of the King's hostile intentions, and on 17th April Leslie's commission as commander-in-chief was renewed. This time he determined that there should be no shortage in the equipment of his forces, and, accordingly, those faithful to the principles of the Covenant were asked to bring contributions of plate and treasure, to swell the war chest. The response to this appeal was even more hearty than had been anticipated, and by July Leslie was at the head of 20,000 men, with all the necessary stores and equipment. Confident in the material backing they now possessed, the Estates had met on 2nd June, and, after passing the Acts which had hitherto been delayed, had appointed a Committee for the government of the country.

When the members of the General Assembly arrived at Aberdeen on 29th June, they found no royal commissioner to greet them. Undeterred by his absence, they got to work and passed *inter alia* acts against witches, and against revilers of the Covenant.\* Fiery debates,

\* Cunningham, "Church History," ii. 31.

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however, took place regarding private religious meetings conducted by laymen, which had sprung up in different parts of the country. These Brownistic tendencies, so completely opposed to the spirit of Presbyterianism, had been introduced by refugees from Ireland, and no one had attacked them with greater vehemence, in season and out, than Henderson. Complaints had been made in Edinburgh about his activity in this direction—he had issued a series of caveats—but later events showed that his anxiety was only too well founded.\* Prior to the meeting of the Assembly he had drawn up a scheme for regulating family worship which, it was thought, would solve all difficulties, but the stormy discussions still went on. Henderson was absent from the deliberations of the Assembly proper, being detained in the Scottish capital, and Baillie tells us that he was greatly missed, as the Moderator had “neither weight in his discourse nor dexterity in guiding.”†

While the “drum ecclesiastic” was still sounding, the rest of Scotland was engaged in mustering for the coming fray. Under the guidance of the most experienced leaders in the kingdom the army moved slowly towards the Border. Very few, if any, of those who had taken part in the previous venture were absent. True, there was not perfect concord. It was whispered that some were disaffected with the

\* Baillie, Letter 14.

† *Idem.*

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course of events, and sinister rumours lingered round the name of Montrose. But visibly all was yet well, and it was a confident host which forded the Tweed on 20th August, none being more conspicuous than Montrose himself, who was the first man to make the crossing.

It was an ill-disciplined and half-hearted force which gathered round Charles at York, where he appeared on 22nd August. The only people who responded whole-heartedly to his appeals were the bishops, and it was due to their financial support that Charles was able to gather an army at all.

To justify their actions to the world at large, and especially to the sympathetic people of England, the Covenanters, following their now usual custom, published several pamphlets, one of which was entitled, "Six Considerations of the Lawfulness of their Expedition into England Manifested." But the Scots were now firmly convinced that delay was worse than dangerous, and so they pressed on through Northumberland. On the 27th they came face to face at Newburn, with a considerable force under Lord Conway, to whom the defence of Newcastle was entrusted. On the following day active hostilities were engaged in, the result being the complete triumph of the Scots, who crossed the Tyne and entered Newcastle on Sunday, the 30th, none opposing their progress. Henderson had, of course, travelled with the army, and, on the afternoon of the entry into Newcastle, he occupied the pulpit of St. Nicholas' Church. In

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his sermon he made no attempt to disguise his elation at the complete triumph of the Covenanting arms, for one who was present noted that he so much forgot his text and the duty of his calling, that he fell into a strange extravagant way of applauding their success and depraving the English, making that the whole subject of his discourse.\*

The Covenanters were now in a position to enforce any demands they chose to make, but their mood was pacific, and during the opening days of September they petitioned the King, through the Earl of Lanark, for a firm and lasting peace. Charles was ill-disposed to climb down, but circumstances were too strong for him, the more so as the petition of the twelve English peers, craving for a Parliament, reached him about the same time. Accordingly, negotiations were opened at Ripon on the 2nd of October between representatives of the Covenanters, among whom was Henderson, and fifteen of the English nobility.

The first question to claim attention was the support of their army, the Scots insisting that until affairs were settled it was the duty of Charles to provide for them. On 16th October this point was conceded, the arrangement being that they were to receive £850 a day as long as they remained in England. In order to enable the English commissioners to attend the forthcoming Parliament, the negotiations were transferred

\* Fenwick, "Christ Ruling in the Midst of His Enemies," p. 29.



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from Ripon to London on 26th October, and on that date a cessation of arms was agreed on, pending a final settlement. What had already been accomplished is well summed up in the following words:—"The Scots Army forced the summoning of the Long Parliament, transferred the struggle for the Covenant from Edinburgh to London, converted a Scottish into an Anglo-Scottish question, and laid the burden of the Army upon the ally, who paid for it, and the English counties that provisioned it."\*

On Saturday, 6th November, Henderson, in company with Robert Baillie and some other ministers, set out for London, and on the Sunday Henderson and Blair preached at Darnton.† About a week later they reached the capital without hurt, save that their purses had suffered severely from the extortions of inn-keepers. On reaching their destination they lodged in the "common garden," Henderson sharing a room with Lord Dunfermline. After a day or two they were invited to remove into the city, and were lodged near London-Stone in a house which had formerly been inhabited by the Lord Mayor or one of the Sheriffs.‡ The Church of St. Antholin, which connected with their dwelling, was assigned to them for the exercise of their devotions, and here Henderson and the others preached during the whole of their stay to audiences which filled the building

\* Terry, "Life of Alexander Leslie," p. 100.

† Baillie, Letter 19.

‡ The following account of Henderson's doings in London is drawn chiefly from Baillie's Letters.



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“from the first appearance of day in the morning on every Sunday to the shutting in of the light.” \*

One cannot help sympathising with the indignation of the Royalist historians at the conduct of the Scots. From the very first, they acted not as negotiators but as the most violent partisans of the disaffected party in the Long Parliament. All who were discontented, along with many who were merely curious, came each Sunday to hear the preachers' comments on the events of the week. Nor did they stop at preaching, for Henderson and Gillespie employed their pens to write declarations against Laud and Strafford, and during their stay they also issued many pamphlets against the polity of the Church of England. In their headstrong zeal for presbytery they stuck at nothing, and this excess of enthusiasm is the only excuse that can be urged for them. Besides, the indiscretions they committed in London recoiled on their own party a hundred-fold, and the creed which flourished by intolerance and bigotry ultimately perished by the same means.

The Scots, however, were not indifferent to the main cause which kept them in London. Shortly after the opening of Parliament, a new committee of both Houses had been appointed to treat with them, and Parliament itself, by officially referring to them as “Our Brethren of Scotland,” showed its appreciation of their active interference. When we consider that the

\* Clarendon, “History of the Rebellion,” vol. i. p. 331.

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Scots were extremely zealous in furthering the famous Root and Branch Petition, and in petitioning the King for "unity of religion and uniformity of Church government," this is not to be wondered at. So much, indeed, were the services of Henderson and his friends appreciated—to say nothing of the Army which lay ever ready to strike—that though their demands were granted in December, the actual treaty was not signed till the 7th of August, 1641. Thus Henderson was a witness of the stirring events which occurred in the spring and early summer of that year—the abolition of the Star Chamber, the Court of High Commission, and the Council of the North; the impeachment and doom of Strafford; and the fall of that stormy petrel, Archbishop Laud, who had managed in an incredibly short space of time to set three kingdoms in a ferment. One can hardly wonder why Henderson was an outstanding figure in his day and generation; for it was his good fortune to be present at every event of importance from 1638 till the day of his death, and to be brought into close relations with the leading personages of the time, from the King downwards.

It was with feelings of relief that Henderson and his fellow commissioners saw the actual confirmation of the Treaty of Ripon, which conceded everything for which they had striven, and more besides. For, in addition to the Acts of the Edinburgh Parliament being legalised, a clause was inserted which gave grounds for the belief that, in the not far distant future, presbytery

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would take the place of episcopacy as the official religion of the two nations.\*

It was with this object in view that Henderson had striven so ardently during his stay in London, and his pen had been ever active in the good cause. In accordance with a generally expressed desire, he had written a short treatise on Church discipline, and had also contributed a preface to Barrow's attack on the bishops. Along with Rothes and Loudon, he received special marks of the royal favour, although a "sharp paper" proclaiming the continued zeal of the Covenanters against episcopacy and the two incendiaries, Strafford and Laud, somewhat soured the King's temper. Naturally grieved at the storm which this production raised, Henderson followed it up with a carefully written pamphlet which Baillie called "a most delicate expression of our desires of unity in the ecclesiastic government in all the King's domains."†

While their representatives were figuring thus prominently in the capital, the General Assembly duly met at St. Andrews on the 20th of July, with the Earl of Wemyss as royal commissioner, Charles having been persuaded by Henderson to drop Lord Southesk, his first choice. Trouble arose over the election of a Moderator, it being felt that while Henderson was the most suitable candidate, his absence in England was an insurmountable obstacle. Matters were still further complicated by a petition that the sittings of the

\* Cunningham, "Church Hist.," ii. p. 34.

† Letter 27.

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Assembly should be transferred to Edinburgh, in order that those present who were also members of Parliament might attend to their duties. It was ultimately agreed to adjourn to the capital, and the next sederunt was appointed for the 27th, by which date Henderson had returned from England to the great joy of his friends.\*

At the first session, Calderwood created some unpleasantness by arguing very passionately that Henderson was incapable of a commission, and this was seconded by Henderson himself, who never can be said to have sought office. This objection quashed, Henderson was elected Moderator by a large majority, although he protested earnestly against the burden of office. His first act was to read letters from some of the London ministers, in which complaints were made that the presence of Independents in their ranks was an obstacle to the establishment of presbyterianism. He was directed by the Assembly to send a reply condemning the former as directly contrary to the Covenant, but approving the latter purpose. The inevitable heart-burnings about private meetings were renewed, and Henderson, to whom the question was a vital one, drew up several papers on the subject, one of which, despite its ambiguity and indefiniteness, was ultimately approved by the Assembly. Discussion next took place regarding Henderson's motion that a catechism, a confession, a directory for worship, and a form of Church government should be prepared, and the task

\* Baillie, Letter 30.



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was unanimously entrusted to him, with liberty to "vaik from preaching" whenever he pleased, and to call in others to his assistance when necessary. His true object in making these proposals is made plain in his official reply to the letter received from the London divines; he there pleads, in the Assembly's name, that the same formularies should be binding on both kingdoms. The need for co-operation with England was ever in his mind. "My desire," he wrote to Baillie on 20th April, 1642, "is to see what form (of worship) England will pitch upon before we publish ours." \*

On Saturday, 7th August, the Assembly was greatly exercised over Henderson's petition to be translated from his Edinburgh charge. In urging this request he pointed out that his voice was weak, and his general health bad—so bad that to keep him there was to kill him. He also reminded the Assembly that one of the conditions of his leaving Leuchars was his right to be transported, should the capital not agree with his health. It is probable that what weighed with him more than anything else were the attacks provoked in some quarters by his attitude in the recent controversy about private meetings. He had also received an invitation to become Principal of the College at St. Andrews, and it was but natural that he should linger over such a tempting and congenial offer. However, when there was a prospect of losing him, the city of Edinburgh was much exercised, and showed its

\* Masson's "Milton," ii. 419.



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sincerity by offering to buy him a house with good air and yards, giving him leave to preach only when he would, and promising to let him go freely if his health did not mend.

Touched by these expressions of esteem, Henderson assured the House that health was his real reason for seeking a change, and that what he desired was not St. Andrews, but some small landward charge where he might retire from the heat and burden of the day. On the Monday the Assembly showed they respected his desires by granting him the desired liberty, but he never availed himself of this permission. Shortly afterwards the Assembly was closed by the singing of the 23rd Psalm.

Within a day or two of its close a somewhat delicate situation arose, the Covenanters being called on to entertain their lawful monarch, who arrived in Edinburgh on 14th August, to preside over the deliberations of Parliament which had been marking time since the 15th of July. As early as May of this year Charles had proposed to visit Scotland, hoping, as we know, to make political capital out of the dissensions which were now apparent in the hitherto compact Covenanting ranks. It is not our duty to discuss the doings of the "Incendiaries" and "Banders" whom Charles relied on to bolster up his tottering throne; the more so as, by the time of his arrival, the Covenanters held the whip-hand, and the dangerous Montrose was languishing in Edinburgh Castle. What we have to note is that, throughout his whole stay in Scotland, Charles

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swallowed his pride, and assiduously set himself to conciliate the ruling party.

On the Sunday after his arrival he worshipped in the Abbey Church, and heard a good sermon from Henderson on the text, "By Him, to Him, and through Him are all things." As the King was absent from service in the afternoon, preferring the pleasures of golf, Henderson took him to task, and was assured that the offence would not be repeated again.\* In his capacity of King's chaplain, Henderson had to arrange for the royal devotions during the visit, and they were nothing if not thorough. Every morning and evening, before supper, he said prayers, read a chapter, sang a psalm, and said prayers again. The long-suffering King (as Baillie is careful to note†) heard all duly, and made no complaints for want of a Liturgy or any ceremonies.

On the Tuesday the King proceeded to Parliament in state, and after Henderson had offered prayer, made a gracious speech in which he announced his intention of carrying out all the wishes of the Covenanters. As an earnest of his good faith, he desired immediately to give his royal assent to the Acts of the Glasgow Assembly, and could hardly be restrained from so doing. During the ensuing weeks his zeal grew visibly, and he even went the length of subscribing the Covenant. But if he had hoped by these means to consolidate a party to be used against the English Parliament, he was doomed

\* Baillie, Letter 30.

† *Idem.*

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to disappointment, and this grew more apparent as time went on.

The famous "Incident" which occurred on 11th October is a matter for the general historian, and is only mentioned here because of its after effects. Chief among these was a growing suspicion of the King, and a growing tendency to look askance at anyone who shared his intimacy. Needless to say, Henderson did not escape these attacks, and he was made to feel in many ways that he was alienating his former friends and allies. He had advised his friends, when the conduct of "Incendiaries" and "Banders" was under review, to "forget the past as much as might be," but such forbearance was incomprehensible to the rest of his party. "Good Mr. Henderson all this while was very silent, and under misconstruction with the chief of his old friends, as if he had been too sparing of His Majesty in these dangerous occasions, and that in his sermons some sentences did fall from him prejudicial to the State's proceedings."\*

It is probable that jealousy had a good deal to do with these attacks, for Charles undoubtedly showed friendship to Henderson, and at the distribution of honours and episcopal spoils, assigned him the rents of the Chapel Royal, which were formerly esteemed a morsel for a bishop, and which amounted to some 4000 merks a year. But there was a deeper reason than mere jealousy for ostracising Henderson. Hitherto he had been in complete accord with the aims and

\* Baillie, Letter 31.

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✓ objects of his party. But now, when their anti-monarchical zeal threatened to outrun their discretion, they sought, as Aiton says, for men less sincere and more reckless. Henderson's was one of these rare and disinterested natures which instinctively seeks the right, and will not be swayed by the impulse of the moment. He was no place-seeker, yet honours were showered upon him. He was no Court sycophant, yet the King sought him out, and appears to have respected his judgment. And while those around him were fighting for offices and emoluments, he contrived, with great difficulty, to obtain the rents of the bishopric and priory for the University of Edinburgh.

On 28th October news reached Scotland of the Irish rebellion and massacre, and Charles now showed great eagerness to be gone. His impending departure relieved Henderson of duties which were no sinecure, as he had to provide two preachers every Sabbath, and one upon the Tuesday, "and he could not get men according to his mind."\*

Parliament concluded its sittings on 17th November, Henderson conducting the customary devotions. In the evening Charles entertained the nobility in the banqueting-hall of Holyrood, and left Scotland on the next day, never again to set foot in the capital of his native kingdom.

\* Baillie, Letter 31.

## VII

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**E**VENTS now moved with dramatic suddenness, and Charles soon discovered that he was no longer lord of his own. On 4th January, 1642, he made his abortive attempt on the Five Members; on 23rd April he summoned Hull; and on 22nd August he raised his standard at Nottingham.

In Scotland, however, there is little to chronicle until the meeting of the General Assembly at St. Andrews on 27th July. The second day was observed as a fast, and Henderson preached graciously and wisely from 2 Corinthians vi. 1, 2, and 3, taxing freely the vices of ministers and the humours of novation.\* Thereafter, Mr. Robert Douglas was elected Moderator, and as he anticipated some difficulty in dealing with the business which might arise, he arranged to have private meetings with his assessors, one of whom was Henderson. At this Assembly a gracious letter was received from the King, but there was also one from the Parliament of England, in which there was much talk of reformation in their Church, and of the good which this would bring in its train. This was skilfully backed up by "A Letter from Some Ministers of England,"

\* Baillie, Letter 31.



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in which reference was made to Henderson as "a brother as justly approved by you and honoured by us,"\* and which spoke at large of the benefits of presbytery.

To Henderson was entrusted the duty of replying to these communications, and in both he pressed the necessity for unity in religion and uniformity of Church government, a desire which was now ever present with the Covenanters, and which was to lead them into endless difficulties.

On Friday, 30th July, Henderson was the principal actor in a scene which must have been extremely trying both to himself and his friends. The favours he had received from Charles, and the moderation of his sermons had given offence to the more rigid Covenanters, and he was now openly accused of temporising. He usually sat silent under misconstructions, but now he delivered a long and passionate vindication of his actions in regard to the appointment of Mr. William Murray as procurator for the Church. This individual was supposed to be deep in all the plots which had recently harassed the faithful, hence Henderson's desire to clear himself. With regard to the insinuations which had been made as to his relations with the King, Henderson was equally outspoken, and with righteous indignation he told the House that what he had got from the King for attendance on a painful charge was no pension; that he had touched, as yet, none of it; and that he was vexed with injurious calumnies. Baillie, who was a sympathetic

\* Peterkin, "Records," p. 329.

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observer, tells us that “after the venting of his stomach, to all our much compassion, the gracious man was eased in his mind, and more cheerful.”\* He goes on to say, however, that there were grounds for suspecting a change in Henderson’s attitude, notably some expressions in his sermons before the King, and also his failure to apply his doctrine to the evil of the times. “Yet opposed to such unpleasant whispers were the man’s great honesty, and unparalleled abilities to serve this Church and Kingdom, and both these did ever remain untainted.”

On Monday, 2nd August, the Assembly decided to supplicate both King and Parliament for peace, and Lord Maitland was dispatched with the documents which Henderson had previously drawn up; while the Commissioners of the Church, already in London, were instructed to labour for the same end.

The only other notable piece of work with which we are directly concerned was the appointment of a standing committee, comprising the flower of the nobility and clergy, with full powers to help on the great project of Presbyterian unity; to confer with the King and the Parliament; and, if necessary, to prepare the talked-of catechism, confession, directory, and form of government.† Needless to say, Henderson was an active member of this new and all-powerful body, which in course of time met to consider the replies of King and Parliament to its communications. The

\* Letter 32.

† Cunningham, “Church History,” ii. p. 39.

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former was short and to the point, stating, as it did, that the Parliament would never adopt presbytery. Naturally, the Covenanters preferred to believe the assurances of Parliament itself, which pointed out that it had made a good start by abolishing the office of bishops, and asked for the assistance of some Covenanting divines at its Synod, to be held on 5th November.

A curious reluctance was shown by the ministers who were chosen in answer to this appeal. Henderson was extremely averse from going, and pointed out that his last journey to the capital was undertaken to the extreme prejudice of his health. Finding his protestations unavailing, his natural indignation got the better of him, and he bitterly complained of those who, while reviling him at every turn, were none the less eager to utilise his services, however troublesome the undertaking.

During September the Scottish conservators of peace who had been appointed by the last Parliament made a determined effort to avert further bloodshed, and to rally their countrymen to the King's support. Under Hamilton's influence, a letter was sent requesting that the Queen, who was in Holland, should return to Britain and endeavour to mediate between the disputants. Failing this, the signatories pledged themselves to support the throne. It is pleasing to know that among those who showed such moderation of sentiment was Alexander Henderson, and had the King but received the overture in a proper spirit, history might have developed

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on very different lines. As it was, those who could best have served the royal cause were reluctantly forced into the opposite camp, and Charles was left to go on his way to destruction.

Meanwhile, the battle of Edgehill had been fought, and it was realised by both sets of combatants that the Scots would prove the deciding factor in the struggle. In November, Parliament appealed to them for support, and a month later Charles followed suit. When these communications were discussed in the Council, the Royalists had their way, and only the King's declaration was made public. Popular agitation was, however, so strong that the Council were forced to climb down, announce that this premature publication did not necessarily imply approval, and publish the Parliament's declaration as well. They also appointed commissioners to proceed to England and mediate between the belligerents; and Henderson, who was one of those chosen for the delicate task, drew up a plea for the abolition of Episcopacy, the establishment of Presbyterianism in its stead, and the summoning of a Scottish Parliament.

Towards the end of February, 1643, Henderson and his fellow-commissioners made their way to the King who was then at Oxford. In this stronghold of Royalism they were but coldly received. At first, His Majesty would give them no hearing until Lord Lanark, who was detained by the Parliamentarians, should arrive. Then he demanded to see their instructions, and questioned their power to treat. The loyalists



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seem to have founded their hopes on Henderson's influence with Charles, and his petition from the Assembly against Prelacy and Popery was the first to be submitted. In this connection, Clarendon remarks that the King resolved not only to use the person of Mr. Henderson very graciously, and to protect him from these affronts which he might naturally expect in a university town, but also to return an answer with all possible candour to the petition itself.

Twenty days elapsed before the King was ready with his answer, and matters were not improved when it was discovered that this very petition had been printed in London, and circulated far and wide. According to Clarendon,\* Henderson also confessed to His Majesty that he had three or four letters to the most active and seditious preachers about London, from men of the same spirit in Scotland, and the historian goes on to state that as Henderson was not covered by the safe-conduct, matters might have gone hard with him.

The King's gracious answer was a curt negative, and the petition which Lord Loudon presented, craving that a Scottish Parliament might be summoned, was treated in the same summary fashion. Meanwhile, the Commissioners' spirits had been fretted by vexatious delays, and they were eager to get away from Oxford, where, if Baillie reports them aright, their lives were far from enviable. Henderson especially had to put up with many affronts,

\* "Hist. of the Rebellion," iii. pp. 507, *et seq.*



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and he was accused of having treated some grave and learned doctors with great insolence, superciliously refusing to hold any intercourse with them. As a matter of fact, Henderson seems wisely to have declined being lured into a hot controversy over the Constitution of the Church of England, and in this he showed great discretion.

As it was, the presence of the Scots was very unsavoury to the good folk of Oxford. "In the streets, and from the windows, they were continually reviled by all sorts of people; and by their secret friends they were desired to look to their persons, as if from stabbing or poison there had been some danger from that enraged party of Prelates and Papists, against whom their commission was expressed."\*

Soured by such treatment, and especially hurt by the attitude of the King, who regarded their exertions with indifference, if not with contempt, the Commissioners asked leave to visit London ere returning home. This last request was met with a flat refusal by Charles, who significantly remarked that if they did not go straight home, they would have to reckon with the zealous Royalists in the north of England.

In the beginning of May the Scottish Commissioners, thankfully shaking the dust of Oxford from their feet, returned to Edinburgh, where they found their friends in anxious conclave. On the 9th Henderson gave in his report to the

\* Baillie, Letter 34.

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Standing Commission of Assembly, which declared its full satisfaction with all he had done, but strongly censured the attitude of the King. It was resolved to send up a new supplication for uniformity of Church government, and a protest against the employment of Papists, Henderson being left to deal with the matter at his leisure.

The events of the next day or two showed how completely the King had succeeded in alienating the support of all moderate men. In direct defiance of the royal right, a Convention of Estates was summoned for the 22nd of June, on the ostensible plea that it was necessary to put the Borders in a state of defence, owing to the warlike position on the English frontier. It was pretty well known what the upshot of this drastic decision would be, and others besides Baillie confidently anticipated a call to arms on behalf of the English Parliamentarians.

During the short interval before this momentous Convention met, Henderson was engaged in an enterprise which taxed his talents to the fullest extent. Montrose, whose vacillations we have noticed, had offered earlier in the year to raise a Scottish force and take the field on behalf of Charles. Preferring to rely on the advice of Hamilton, whose tortuous diplomacy is well-nigh unfathomable, Charles had refused the offer, and now Montrose was sulking in his tent, although still secretly cherishing his schemes. To the Covenanters, who were fairly accurately informed of what was going on, it seemed that

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an attempt should be made to win over one so powerful, and to this end they held out the most alluring promises. For reasons of his own Montrose encouraged these advances, but declared that he had scruples which could only be removed by the great Alexander Henderson, who at that time was still in England. As soon as he was at liberty, therefore, Henderson set out on his mission, and on a date between the 10th and 22nd of June, came face to face with his former companion, hard by the bridge which spans the river Forth at Stirling.\* For two hours the abortive conference went on. Henderson explained at length the proposals of the Covenanters, and, thinking that Montrose had repented of his recent courses, urged him to cast off all reserve and throw in his lot with those who would not be unmindful of his support. But Montrose, whose hypocrisy had deceived even so acute an observer as Henderson, had no intention of changing his course. Returning an evasive answer, he departed with his friends, and soon had joined the King at Oxford, where his heroic devotion to an ill-starred cause made him for a time the most notable man in the kingdom.

Heralded by a solemn fast, at which the political events of the day were canvassed from every pulpit, the Convention of Estates met in Edinburgh on the 22nd of June. The Commis-

\* The account of the meeting between Henderson and Montrose is drawn from Mark Napier's "Montrose and the Covenanters" (1838).

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sion of Assembly sat simultaneously, and one of their first acts was to put out a remonstrance dealing with the dangers which beset the Church and the kingdom. This the Estates duly received, and they were so gracious as to ask for further advice, which the ministers of course gave. In its spare time, the Commission devoted itself to the schisms within the Church, rather against the inclinations of Henderson, in whose eyes the coming conference with the English Parliamentarians was all-important.\*

Meanwhile, a letter had arrived from Charles denouncing the meeting of the Convention as *ultra vires*, but permitting them to discuss such subjects as the maintenance of the Irish army, and the measures to be taken for keeping order in Scotland; the affairs of England were, however, tabooed. Undeterred by the royal mandate, the Convention met from day to day, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the English deputies who had been expected on the opening day, and of whose non-arrival no explanation had been given. After fourteen days of vexatious delay, one Corbet arrived, full of excuses, and bearing the satisfactory message that Parliament had summoned an assembly as the Scots had desired, and were eager that some divines should be sent to assist in its deliberations. This request was properly referred to the forthcoming general assembly; and the Convention contented itself by raising a few levies under pretext of keeping the country quiet.

\* Baillie, Letter 35.



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On the 2nd of August the Assembly was duly constituted, Sir Thomas Hope, the Lord-Advocate, acting as royal commissioner. On the preceding day a private conference had been held in Edinburgh on the invitation of Lord Warriston.\* The question of the vacant moderatorship was discussed at length, for momentous affairs were afoot, strangers were to be present, and widely divergent opinions were to be represented on the floor of the House. It was quickly seen that Henderson was the one man for such an emergency; and the worthy Baillie laments the paucity of leaders whereby they were so often forced to resort to the same man. It was felt, too, that Henderson would be better employed in penning such writs as should be necessary before the Assembly rose. Accordingly, the opinion of the meeting inclined in favour of Mr. Robert Blair, until it was discovered that he was bedridden at St. Andrews, whereupon Henderson's name was finally decided on.

Henderson's attitude towards public affairs at this juncture is well summed up by Guthrie.† "Earlier in the year he was inclined that the Covenanters should have rested with their own reformation, which the King had confirmed, and not to have meddled with the affairs of the English. But by this time they had prevailed with him to go their way, whereby, indeed, they gained one great point—for he was so revered by the generality of the ministers in the country, that they could scarcely have had them on their

\* Baillie, Letter 36.

† "Memoirs," p. 131.



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side without him." Guthrie is hardly right, however, in laying such stress on the fact that Henderson's new attitude was the result of pressure by his friends. It needed no very acute observation to read the signs of the times, and Henderson's was a mind which intuitively grasped the essentials of any case, no matter how involved. It is more reasonable to assume that his personal loyalty to the King had been warring with his conviction that the hour for drastic action was at hand, and that his recent reception at Oxford had confirmed him in his decision to swim no longer against an irresistible tide. Subsequent events more than confirm this impression. Once having made his resolution, Henderson bent his whole mind to meet the altered situation.

Proceedings were opened on the Wednesday with a solemn fast, Henderson preaching in the afternoon.\* After the devotions the first session was held, and the usual routine business of handing in commissions transacted. According to custom, the retiring Moderator gave in a list of five names, consisting of Henderson's and four others, who had no intention of competing with him. But when these brethren withdrew their nominations, there was considerable outcry on the part of the generality who were not in the secret, and the names of James Bonner and David Lindsay were both brought forward. It was to avoid such a contingency that the earlier

\* For an account of this Assembly see Baillie, Letter 36; Guthrie's "Memoirs"; and Peterkin's "Records."

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leet had been framed, and the new development was met by a motion that, notwithstanding the Assembly's right to add to the leet, it was not expedient at the moment to do so. Henderson was then unanimously elected Moderator.

Part of Thursday (the second day) was devoted to the important business of choosing committees, and a body of assessors was appointed to assist the Moderator with its advice. Matters of routine occupied the attention of the fathers and brethren on the Friday and Saturday, interest centering in the expected arrival of the English Commissioners. At last, on Monday, 17th, when the patience of the Assembly was all but exhausted, news came in that the strangers had landed at Leith. Arrangements were made to welcome them with due ceremony, and Henderson exhorted the House "to be more grave than ordinary." Baillie goes on to remark that Henderson did moderate with some little austere severity, as was necessary, and became his person well.

The next few days were full of incident. Henderson announced that the English ministers were eager to know the most convenient way by which their Commissioners might address the Synod; and some ministers and elders were sent to welcome them. A somewhat elaborate scheme was thereupon devised, along the following lines. They were to follow their own procedure in addressing the Assembly; they might, at any time they pleased, watch its deliberations from a private gallery set apart

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for their use ; in their official capacity they were not to approach the Assembly at first hand, but through the mediumship of a committee. Needless to say, Henderson was a member of this committee, which found that the English visitors consisted of Sir William Armin, Sir Harry Vane, the younger, Mr. Hatcher and Mr. Darley, along with two ministers, Mr. Marshall and Mr. Nye. This deputation dwelt on the Parliament's care of reforming religion, their desire of some Scottish ministers to join with their divines for that end, and their hope that the Assembly would use its influence in securing the help of the State for them. To lend weight to these representations, they presented a letter from the assembly of divines, which was already sitting, and another, signed by some seventy ministers, supplicating help in their present desperate straits.

All these communications were presented to the Assembly and read openly, and it was agreed that the same committee should make ready the answers in the name of the Assembly, and present them for ratification with all possible speed.

If we are to believe Guthrie's version of the proceedings, there would seem to have been a determination on the part of Henderson and the other leaders that the rank and file were not to be allowed to interfere in the subsequent negotiations. As soon as Henderson had finished his lengthy speech, Guthrie sprang to his feet, and, in the course of a few trenchant

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remarks, laid his finger on the weak spot in the English proposals. The Parliamentarians had told them, he said, of their zeal in demolishing the superstructure of episcopacy. He wanted them to be as express concerning that which they resolved to introduce as they had been in that which was to be removed. Guthrie (who is our only authority for the incident) tells of the dramatic effect which his words produced. "The Moderator paused a long time upon Mr. Guthrie's discourse, and at last made no direct reply to it. And that which was strange was, that although many in the House did in their conscience approve it (as themselves afterwards acknowledged in private), yet none of them did second it. Whereby it came to pass that the Moderator and his assessors had the business committed to them." And the unfortunate Guthrie was condemned as a "Rotten Malignant."

Aiton holds that by acting as he did, Henderson committed an irreparable blunder,\* and goes on to point out that as the Royalists had just taken Bristol and were victorious on all hands, now was the time to have wrung the most favourable terms from Parliament. It is difficult to quarrel with this verdict, but we must not forget that Henderson had begun to be aware of elements in the English mind that would probably not brook the control of any mere Scottish form of Church discipline or stay within its limits, and he was following both

\* "Life of Henderson," p. 507.



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conscience and prudence in declining to coerce. Henderson had, however, made up his mind that the Scots must interfere actively between the belligerents, and this view had the support of the whole committee. Still, for some time the wisest of them were uncertain as to what course they should adopt. Meldrum had been sent up to London to sound public opinion there, and on his return the committee held numerous sittings ere coming to a decision.

Their conclaves with the English deputies were equally unsatisfactory. The latter were for a civil league, while the Scots held out for a religious covenant. What followed seems to explain Henderson's point of view from the outset. He knew what he wanted to get, and on the face of it, his desires were satisfied. By dint of steady pressure, the English consented to a religious covenant; then Henderson produced a draft which in his eyes was absolutely watertight against Independency. To all the protestations of the Parliament men the Scots were adamant. Finally, they carried the day, but not before a trifling emendation had been made, the effect of which was to undo all they had laboured to build up.

The gist of Henderson's covenant was as follows:—The subscribers were to bind themselves to labour for the preservation of the reformed religion in Scotland, and for the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and



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the example of the best Reformed Churches; to endeavour the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, and schism; to defend the privileges of the Parliament and the person and authority of the King; and reveal all malignants and incendiaries who should obstruct their purposes.

It was on the suggestion of Sir Harry Vane that the innocent-looking clause, "According to the Word of God," was added to the original draft. The Covenanters could hardly take exception to such a pious hope, and it never occurred to them to doubt that anything else than Presbyterianism could be meant, or that it was open to any Englishman to assert that any part of the Presbyterian system which he disliked was not "According to the Word of God." The events of the next few years were to bring a rude awakening, but it was quite probable, as Cunningham suggests, that at the time there was perfect good faith on both sides.\*

On 17th August the Solemn League and Covenant, to give its historical designation, was brought before the General Assembly. Before it was read, Henderson delivered a weighty oration in which he discussed its significance. Of the actual covenant, Baillie tells us† that it was received "with the greatest applause that ever I saw anything, with so hearty affections, expressed in the tears of pity and joy, by very many grave, wise, and old men." After it had

\* "Church History," ii. p. 44.

† Letter 36.

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been read a second time, the opinion of representative ministers and elders was taken, none opposing it except the King's commissioner, and a minister named Erskine, who moved for delay.\* In the afternoon, the Convention of Estates passed it with the same cordial unanimity, a proceeding which seemed highly suspicious to Bishop Burnet. "Observers," he says,† "wondered to see a matter of that importance carried through upon so little deliberation or debate. It was thought strange to see all their consciences of such a size so exactly to agree as the several wheels of a clock, which made all apprehend there was some first mover that directed all those other motions; this by the one party was imputed to God's extraordinary providence, but by others to the power and policy of the leaders, and the simplicity and fear of the rest."

It is not difficult to see that Henderson was the man to whom these remarks principally referred. He was a leader among leaders, and yet such was his natural humility, that the accusation of arbitrary conduct has seldom been levelled against him, nor can any evidence be found to support it.

The rest of the business transacted by the Assembly need not detain us. One or two thorny subjects which might have caused dissension were settled by Henderson with great wisdom and acumen. Before the House rose, a committee of eight, which included Henderson,

\* Guthrie, "Memoirs."

† "Memoirs of J. and W. Hamilton."

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was appointed to repair to London to witness the Parliamentary ratification of the new Covenant. Other matters which were disposed of were the Assembly's answers to the King's letter, the English Parliament's declaration, and the private communication from the corresponding brethren in England. The first two were the work of Henderson, and are characterised by his usual lucidity and directness. On Saturday, 19th August, the Assembly concluded its sittings, Henderson closing "with a gracious speech and sweet prayer."

On 30th August Henderson and Gillespie, along with two of the English Commissioners, set sail for London. On arrival there, they were welcomed in the assembly of divines by addresses from Dr. Twisse, the prolocutor, and two others. They found that the Covenant had preceded them, and that one or two alterations had been made in it. Naturally the Scots were annoyed that this had been done when they were not there to speak for the measure. But the matter in dispute was amicably settled, and the Covenant was passed in rapid succession by the Assembly of Divines and by both Houses of Parliament.

On Monday, 25th September, the Covenant was solemnly ratified in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, in presence of the Lords and Commons, the Scots Commissioners, and the Assembly of Divines.\* After the opening prayer, Henderson and Nye spoke in justification of taking the Covenant from Scripture precedents,

\* Neal, "History of the Puritans," iii. 221.

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and showed the advantages the Church had received from such sacred combinations. Henderson then delivered a weighty address, in which he showed how and why the states of Scotland had resolved to assist the Parliament of England in carrying out the ends and designs of this Covenant. The document was then read aloud, solemnly sworn to by all present, and then signed.

From this time onwards, the test of being a Parliamentary in England was "Have you signed the Covenant?" and the test of willingness to become a Parliamentary and of fitness to be forgiven for past backsliding was "Will you *not* sign the Covenant?" Such, as Masson says,\* was the strange fortune of the hurried paper drawn up by Henderson's pen in some room in the High Street of Edinburgh.

Meanwhile, the leaders in Scotland had acted with promptitude and decision. The Convention of Estates issued a proclamation commanding all between the ages of sixty and sixteen to be ready, armed and provisioned for forty days, to march to the appointed rendezvous. After the Covenant had been sworn in the High Kirk of Edinburgh, every pulpit in the country rang with exhortations, and by the beginning of 1644, an army of 20,000 men, under David Leslie, now Earl of Leven, crossed the Border to enforce Presbyterian conformity at the point of the sword.

\* "Life of Milton," iii. 12.

## VIII

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**P**RESBYTERIANISM was now called on to hold its own in the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. This celebrated convention, which commenced its memorable deliberations on 1st July, 1643, was convened by order of both Houses of Parliament, with a view to bringing the ecclesiastical system of England into harmony with that prevailing in Scotland and in the Reformed Churches of the Continent. Naturally enough, Charles placed his embargo on the whole proceedings, but this was no deterrent, and the Assembly, which consisted of 121 divines and 30 lay assessors, started to carry out the terms of its remit.

Many widely divergent schools of opinion were gathered under the roof of King Henry VII.'s Chapel, where the sederunts were at first held. The only sect utterly unrepresented were the high-flying Episcopalians, who had deserted in a body when the Covenant was first mooted, with the result that throughout the subsequent proceedings not a voice was raised in praise of the fallen Church. A great majority of the members favoured Presbyterianism, and it may be said that they mirrored the bulk of moderate opinion in the country. Next, but very inferior



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in numerical strength, came the Erastians—those who held that the pastoral office was merely persuasive, and that the punishment of all offences, either of a civil or religious nature, should be reserved for the magistrate. Among their supporters were numbered such names as Lightfoot, Coleman, Selden, and Whitelock, and the presentation of their case lost nothing in such hands. Last, but by no means least, were the Independents or Congregationalists, whose original strength of some ten or twelve divines was to be the little leaven which ultimately leavened the whole lump.

The first business to which the Assembly addressed itself was the over-hauling of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and it had discussed fifteen of them at great length when orders came from Parliament that they were to turn their attention to that Church government and worship which might be most agreeable to God's Holy Word—and to a nearer agreement with the Church of Scotland. Writing a month later, on 17th November, Baillie says with reference to this: "At last the Assembly of Divines have permission to fall on the question of Church government. What here they will do, I cannot say. Mr. Henderson's hopes are not great of their conformity to us, before our army be in England"—a remark which, if true, shows that he had gauged the ecclesiastical situation pretty accurately.

On Monday, 20th November, the Scots Commissioners made their bow at Westminster. They were six in number, there being, besides Henderson,

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Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford, and George Gillespie, ministers; with Lord Maitland and Sir Archibald Johnston of Warriston, elders. Having previously provided themselves with "causey-cloaths," they sent to both Houses of Parliament for the warrants necessary to admit them to the Assembly. These were readily granted, and were presented by Henderson to Dr. Twisse, the prolocutor, or chairman of the Assembly. Three members were sent to bring them in with due ceremony, and then they were welcomed by Dr. Twisse, who referred, in the course of his lengthy address, to their hazardous voyage by land and sea, undertaken at so unseasonable a time of year. When he had ended, the Scots sat down in the seats which they occupied throughout the Assembly.

Baillie has graphically described the internal arrangements of the Assembly which, owing to the cold weather, had removed to the Jerusalem Chamber, "a fair room in the Abbey of Westminster," where there was a comfortable fire, round which the Lords of Parliament used to stand and listen to the proceedings.

On their first coming, the Commissioners were asked to sit as members of the Assembly, but this they declined to do, holding that they were there as representatives from the Church of Scotland, that their business was to treat for conformity, and that they should be dealt with in that capacity. As private individuals, they were willing to take their seats, and even to give their advice on occasion. But their first duty had to

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be considered, and they requested that a committee should be appointed from the Parliament and the Assembly to meet with them. After some rather acrimonious discussion, these demands were granted.

During this time, feeling was running high regarding the office-bearers of the Church, and the office of doctor was discussed at considerable length. The Independents held that the doctor should be a divine institution in every congregation, just as much as the pastor, while the other party maintained the identity of the two. Henderson, like the accomplished diplomatist he was, poured oil on the troubled waters, and succeeded in establishing a conciliation committee. By so doing, he got the disputants to agree unanimously on six main propositions, in which the absolute necessity of a divinely instituted doctor in every congregation was not formally stated, although, in cases where there were two ministers, the one might apply himself specially to teaching, and the other to Scriptural exhortation.

The peculiarly Presbyterian institution of ruling elders was strenuously debated for many days, and the attacks on it were not confined to the Independents, but were taken part in by "sundry of the ablest" in the other parties. The burden of the defence was laid on the shoulders of Henderson, Rutherford, and Gillespie, and all three acquitted themselves with credit. Although they commanded a majority of votes on their side, rather than force their opinions on such a powerful minority, the Scots agreed to refer the matter to

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a committee, and this policy was eminently successful. In the end, they carried the day, and not only the elder but the perpetual deacon was recognised as an integral part of the new polity.\*

Ecclesiastical affairs throughout England were, meantime, in a state of chaos, owing mainly to the refusal of the bishops to ordain those who were not in the interests of the Crown. This naturally led to a discussion of the right of presbyters to ordain without a bishop, a right which some denied, and others as zealously maintained. During this confused interregnum the Anabaptists and other sectaries were making steady headway, until finally the aforementioned committee took alarm and suggested that certain ministers might be appointed to examine likely candidates, ordain them for a stated period, and appoint them to supply vacant charges. The Independents, who were even now manifesting their peculiar genius for obstruction, raised so many objections that at last Henderson and his fellow Scots lost patience, and called on the city ministers to petition Parliament to call for the Assembly's advice in the matter. Furthermore, they suggested that a directory for public worship be prepared with all speed, and that a temporary college should be set up in London to enable refugees from Oxford to prosecute their studies. These suggestions were well received by the Assembly, who appointed a committee to examine probationers who, if satisfactory, were then

\* Baillie, Letter 40.



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temporarily ordained, and appointed to vacant charges.

The uneasiness with which the Independents watched the gradual adoption of Presbyterian forms of Church government can well be imagined, and were it not so, we have abundant testimony in the writings of contemporary annalists. Baillie, who entertained strong opinions regarding the ability and uprightness of the Independent leaders, tells us that they feared nothing less than banishment from their native country should presbyteries be erected, and he adds that "they were watchful lest any conclusion be taken to their prejudice."

The Assembly next set itself to devise a form of devotion which should supersede the old Liturgy, and which Henderson and his friends hoped "would erect in all the parts of worship a full conformity to Scotland, in all things worthy to be spoken of." Accordingly, a sub-committee of five was appointed to co-operate with the Scots in the preparation of a Directory of Worship, and the results of their labour were to be submitted to the grand committee, and finally to the Assembly itself. By dint of judicious concessions to the Independents, the Directory passed the Assembly, was sent to Scotland for the approbation of the General Assembly there, and then established by an ordinance of Parliament, dated 3rd January, 1645, under the title, "A Directory for Public Worship." \*

Conscientious in small matters as in great,

\* Neal, "Hist. of the Puritans," iii. p. 274.



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it vexed Henderson to observe the remnant of superstition which still clung to his English friends. To the proposal that the Assembly should adjourn during the Christmas holidays, he offered a vehement opposition, both in public and in private. However, the majority decided to do nothing until Parliament should intervene. Still, much to their delight, Henderson and his friends succeeded in persuading both Houses to sit on Christmas Day. Wednesday, 27th December, was observed as a solemn fast, and Henderson preached before the House of Commons "a most gracious, wise, and learned sermon,"\* which was officially printed, and for which he was publicly thanked. As was to be expected, he dealt with the reformation of religion, which in his eyes meant the whole-hearted adoption of Presbyterianism.

That Henderson was alert to every move on the part of those from whom he had most to fear is shown in his relations with Cromwell about this time. Cromwell was opposed root and branch to Presbyterianism, which he considered a narrow and oppressive formalism. So he long delayed signing the Covenant. Towards General Crawford, who was the Scottish representative of that creed in the Eastern army, he had all along manifested an open hostility, and had attempted, without success, to get him removed from his command. On the advice of the Earl of Essex, who saw himself being rapidly supplanted by this bigoted upstart, Henderson and his fellow-

\* Baillie, Letter 41.

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commissioners seriously discussed the possibility of impeaching Oliver as an incendiary and violator of the Solemn League and Covenant.\* Whitelocke and Maynard, two noted lawyers whose advice was sought, gave their verdict against the plan, on the ground that without fuller proof, Cromwell was far too strong in both Houses for any such *coup* to succeed. Baillie, whose native caution was apt to be oppressive at times, was also against any drastic action at the moment, and he tells us that Henderson presently applauded and thanked him for his advice.

The whole episode is of interest as showing Henderson's far-seeing outlook on the situation. In a very short time Cromwell had entrenched himself too strongly to be attacked with impunity, and Henderson was to find that for once he had met a stronger mind than his own.

A great part of this year (1644) was occupied in thrashing out that thorny topic, the ordination of elders, and Henderson took his full share in the debates. It is quite beyond the province of this essay to follow out in detail the painfully slow and invariably controversial proceedings of the Assembly, interesting as these undoubtedly are to the student of Church history. The correspondence of Baillie shows only too plainly that the Anabaptists and Antinomians were daily increasing in power, and his own feelings in the matter are set down in blunt terms. When the subject of Church courts was intro-

\* Aiton, p. 535; Baillie, Letter 40; Frederic Harrison's "Life of Cromwell."

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duced, and the Scottish Commissioners expounded their fourfold gradation—the congregational, classical, provincial, and national, citing Scriptural authority for each—all three parties were brought into violent collision. In every subject which pertained to presbytery, Henderson was a tower of strength, and his trouncing of Nye, who held that a national assembly was a menace to the civil state, made a deep impression on his auditors.

It had been suggested to Baillie that perhaps Henderson might be spared to attend the General Assembly of 1644, and the fact that such a suggestion was most vehemently opposed shows how essential was his presence at a time when important points of government and worship were under discussion. "These things are so high, and of so great concernment, that no living man can think Mr. Henderson may be away; and to put him to go and return, it were very hard to venture such a jewel, that is so necessary to the well-being both of Church and State of all these dominions."\* A striking tribute this to Henderson's pre-eminent ability as an ecclesiastical statesman, and one which is emphatically reiterated in subsequent letters.†

As the year wore on, matters grew steadily worse, and we find Baillie writing to his friend Ramsay in a despondent strain. The Assembly was rent by schisms, "and had not God sent Mr. Henderson, Mr. Rutherford, and Mr.

\* Baillie, Letter 47.

† Letters 48 and 52.

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Gillespie among them, there was no hope that they would ever have agreed on any settled government." Ever conciliatory—and this was his leading characteristic—we find Henderson, in a sermon to the House, "bringing them to a sweet conference of the heat confessed in the Assembly," while he also exhorted them "to preach against all sects, especially Anabaptists and Antinomians." \*

Nevertheless, the Independents were not to be put down, and the undisguised congregationalism which they advocated shocked the Scots beyond measure. Nor were the proceedings of the Parliament any more to their liking. They supported the fundamentals of Presbyterianism, it is true, but they showed their determination to keep these courts subservient to civil authority. And by no manner of pleading could Henderson and his friends prevail with them to modify this attitude.

Amid all such vicissitudes, the Scots held steadily on their way, but their patience was often sorely tried. Henderson, for instance, drew up, in his excellent way, a paper setting forth the evils of delaying so long the settlement of religion, and expressing the earnest desire that more expedition might be adopted. In September the Independents attempted to get the House of Commons to pass a general resolution of toleration before Presbyterian government should be legally established. Henderson was

\* Baillie, Letter 59. The sermon was preached on 18th July, 1644, and is reprinted by M'Crie, pp. 69, *sqq.*



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foremost in exposing these sinister designs, and he succeeded in negating their plan.

By the end of 1644 the Assembly had got the troublesome business of the Directory off their hands, Henderson having drawn up an additional minute on the question of excommunication, which had the unusual distinction of satisfying all parties.

Not the least important event of the year 1645 was the Treaty of Uxbridge, which marked one of the periodical attempts to bring about peace between the King and his subjects. During the summer Charles had made vague overtures, which the Parliament endeavoured to weld into definite proposals. Commissioners had gone down to Oxford in November, 1644, but they were so rudely received by the King and his friends that nothing was done.

Finding out that his prospects were not as bright as he had been led to believe, Charles now climbed down a peg, and it was arranged that there should be a treaty-meeting at Uxbridge, to commence on 30th January, and to last for twenty days. There were sixteen commissioners for the King, twelve for the Parliament, and ten for the Scots. In addition, Henderson and four others were present as divines, and the King had the assistance of six clergymen, of whom the chief was Dr. Steward. The propositions to be discussed were religion, the militia, and Ireland; each of which was to be debated three days successively, till the twenty days were expired. Proceedings opened auspiciously with a sermon



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from Mr. Love, a Parliamentary divine, who asserted that there was as great a distance between this treaty and peace as between heaven and hell; and in this determined spirit the farcical conference dragged on, neither side having the slightest trust in the *bona fides* of the other.

With the propositions relating to Ireland and to the militia, we have no concern, but the one relating to Church matters deserves some attention. The disputants—for such they were—were ranged opposite each other, Dr. Steward and a commissioner for the King sitting, covered, behind the Royalist party, while Henderson sat beside his supporters. At the outset, the King laid down the propositions from which he was not prepared to depart. They were—(1) that he was not prepared to do away with government by bishops, owing to the terms of his coronation oath, whereby he had sworn to uphold episcopacy; (2) for similar reasons he would not allow any diminution or alienation of the Church patrimony, but was prepared to deal with any reasonable complaints against abuses; (3) as it was the King's duty to protect the Church, so it was the Church's duty to assist the King in maintaining his just authority, and nothing must be done to lessen this mutual interdependence.

Henderson's instructions were equally emphatic in the other direction. He was ordered to demand a bill abolishing episcopacy; confirming the legality of the Westminster Assembly; and legalising the changes that had already been made. Further, he was to insist that the King

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should take the Solemn League and Covenant, and order that his example should be followed by the subjects of the three kingdoms. Other propositions annexed to these demands emphasised the fundamentals of Presbyterian government, which were carefully set forth.

It fell to Henderson to open the discussion on the bill abolishing episcopacy, and he made what has been described as a "laboured speech," in which he endeavoured to show that the welfare of the State depended on a change in Church government. Was government of the Church by bishops necessary to Christianity? he asked, for if this was the case, every other Reformed Church in Europe stood condemned. In England, Parliament had found episcopacy both inconvenient and corrupt—indeed, it had been a public grievance since the Reformation. But their gravest fault, according to Henderson, was that they had always aided and abetted popery, and that of late years their leanings to Rome had given some offence to the Protestant Churches on the Continent.

In civil matters, again, the prelates had embroiled the people of England and Scotland, and had caused a rebellion in Ireland. In view of these facts, Henderson declared that Parliament had resolved to substitute for this corrupt polity another more suited for the advancement of piety, for the union of all Protestant Churches, and the extinction of popery. Accordingly, he hoped that the King would concur in so commendable and godly an undertaking.

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Dr. Steward, who replied, remarked that the Church of England, which had maintained its unbroken continuity since the foundation of Christianity in the country, was too well grounded to be shaken even by the force of Henderson's rhetoric. Not one atom of proof had he brought forward about the unlawfulness of episcopacy, although he had roundly declared that it was antichristian. As for the Continental Churches with whom this change was to facilitate union, their most noted leaders were conscious of the imperfections in their system, and they looked on the Church of England, with its system of bishops, as the ideal constitution. The learned doctor then descanted at length on the apostolic origin of episcopacy, and proved to his own satisfaction that, without bishops, the priestly office could not be filled, while the sacraments would be utterly valueless.

Henderson and Marshall were at once up in arms at the suggestion that the Continental Reformed Churches lamented the want of episcopacy, and that they esteemed the Church of England so highly. If they did take up this attitude, however—and the point is doubtful—they were hardly correct, for the works of Calvin, Beza, and other foreign divines contain numerous suggestions in favour of episcopacy. Their next assertion, that Presbyterianism had the only claim to a divine right, was equally dogmatic, and drew forth a sharp rejoinder from the Marquis of Hertford.

Dr. Steward now proposed that they should

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dispute syllogistically, as befitted scholars, and Henderson, although he had done no logic or rhetoric since his St. Andrews days, readily assented. For ten days the wordy warfare continued, the points urged by the Royalist divines being strongly opposed by Henderson and his colleagues, and anew replied to. As might have been expected, neither party abated one jot or tittle from its original position.

When the clerical disputants again met in conference, the Royalist Commissioners handed an answer in writing to the specific demands of the Parliament, and at the same time announced the limits to which they were prepared to go. It is hardly necessary to add that the trifling reforms suggested were scornfully brushed aside by Henderson and his party, who reiterated their main demands for the abolition of episcopacy, the establishment of the directory, the legalising of the Westminster Assembly, and the taking of the Covenant. The acrimonious conflict continued for some time longer, but at last the end came when, after some twenty days' strenuous debate, not one point had been conceded on either side.

Contemporary evidence shows that the failure of the Uxbridge conference was regretted by all moderate men, and even by some of the King's most devoted supporters. But, as Neal points out, it was held twelve months too late, and when the hands of both parties were tied.\* Henderson, for instance, laid down his dicta with

\* "Hist. of the Puritans," iii. 350.



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the calm confidence of one who knew that he was able, if need be, to enforce them at the point of the pike. It is hard to believe that he really imagined it was possible to argue his opponents out of one set of opinions into another so vitally different. On the contrary, he adopted a hectoring tone which was as ineffective as it was injudicious.

The King, again, was in an impossible position. If he really meant to make concessions, he was too late, and it is more probable that he was only marking time until something should turn up. All the Stuarts excelled in the policy of temporising; and on this occasion the result justified the means, for news came from Scotland that Montrose was carrying all before him, and this, coupled with the counsels of the Queen, led to Charles losing his last opportunity of coming to terms with his subjects.

While in the Royalist camp, Henderson took the opportunity of obtaining the King's permission to visit Holland, and Baillie mentions in one of his letters that he approached the Parliament with a similar request. He had long cherished a desire to examine at first hand the workings of the Reformed Churches, and probably he also thought that the cause of Presbyterian unity might be advanced a step or two in the course of a fraternal visit. Unfortunately, there are no records to show whether he ever made this journey or not, though the probability is that, at the last moment, something came in the way.

Aiton has an interesting theory in connection



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with this episode in Henderson's career. He suggests that, in addition to linking up the units in the Presbyterian chain, Henderson, who was a Royalist in the sense that he detested republicanism, was anxious to persuade the King of France to mediate between Charles and the Parliament, with a view to saving the former from almost certain destruction.

There is no inherent improbability in such a theory, but one might suggest an equally plausible explanation. At the Uxbridge Conference, the Royalist divines had made assertions about the Reformed Churches and episcopacy which Henderson indignantly denied, whatever vague doubts he may have had. Is it then so very unlikely that he was anxious to see for himself exactly how matters stood, and that he wished to do all in his power to check any possible backsliding, and weld these Churches into one strong and united chain, with the Church of Scotland as the central link? That this subject seems to have been occupying his thoughts is shown by his adding several clauses to a letter which the Assembly sent out about this time to all the foreign Reformed Churches.

By April of this year Baillie was able to write to Scotland that the Assembly had settled the whole matter of Church government, "and that according to the doctrine and practice of the Church of Scotland, in every particular."\* The Houses of Parliament now took the matter into their hands, and it was not till June, 1648,

\* Letter 94.

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that the whole measure became the law of the land.

During the summer, Henderson had an attack of gravel, due no doubt to the long strain entailed by his attendance at Westminster, and the added fatigue of the Uxbridge Conference. Although he was up and doing within a few days, it was evident that his health was by no means robust, for in July Baillie writes that Henderson and Rutherford "are gone this day to Epsom waters." \*

There was talk about this time of another conference with the King, and Baillie, who approved of the idea, writes as follows: "If you condescend to send propositions, by all means let Mr. Henderson be one to go with them. . . . No man on our side so meet as Mr. Henderson." †

Again, in the autumn, Henderson and Baillie were appointed to visit Scotland in order to keep more closely in touch with home affairs, and to spur the flagging energies of their countrymen. The petty jealousies which prevailed in the Scottish Assemblies, and the wretched condition of the army, were diminishing the prestige of Henderson and his colleagues, hence the projected visit. But affairs of moment intervened, and it became impossible for Henderson to leave London. He was needed at the helm, as is shown by the fact that the ministers of London sent twenty of their number to entreat him to remain for some time. His health, too, was causing his friends

\* Letter 107.

† Letter 108 (to Lord Lauderdale).

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some anxiety, and so, though he was the “fittest instrument on earth” for the purpose, the journey was abandoned.

Throughout the autumn and winter, we can imagine him labouring with faithful zeal at the work which fell to his hand. The subsequent proceedings of the Assembly do not come within our province, as Henderson was soon transferred to play the last act of his life on an even more exalted stage. Still, the completed work of the Westminster divines may be noted. By the time they rose, they had given to the world the Form of Church Government, the Directory for Public Worship, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms—epoch-making productions, in the compilation of every one of which Henderson took an active and prominent part.

He also found time to assist in preparing the new version of the Psalms, which was adopted by the General Assembly of 1647, and which is still in use. Francis Rous, a member of the Rump Parliament, was the author of this version, and he derived inspiration from an earlier version which had been prepared by Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, in collaboration with no less a person than King James VI. Henderson had had some acquaintance with the earlier translation, which was published in 1631, for he was appointed by his Synod to give his sound judgment and opinion on the work. Hence his interest in Rous’s work, which probably benefited from his suggestions.

## IX

### Henderson's Last Days

**D**URING the winter of 1645 the fortunes of the Royalists were at a very low ebb, and as Charles, from his now menaced retreat in Oxford, watched the tide setting strongly against him, he saw that he would soon have to decide which was the lesser of two evils—whether to trust his royal person to the English Parliament, or to throw himself on the mercy of the Scots. In this plight he was found by Montereul, a diplomatist who had been sent over by the French King to negotiate an agreement between France, Scotland, and Charles. Montereul joined him at Oxford in the first week of January, 1646, and strongly advised Charles to throw in his lot with the Scots, though he emphasised the fact that they would make no concessions upon the subject of religion. Charles, who took rather a low view of the Scots' motives, holding that they were out for the loaves and fishes of the English establishment, was equally resolute on his part. In so acting he failed, as Professor Sanford Terry has pointed out, to grasp the crusading spirit which animated the Scots in their desire for Presbyterian conformity. "Invariably insistent upon the scruples of his own conscience, he could not

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understand that his opponents might be similarly swayed." \*

The step which Charles contemplated was not long concealed from the parties most concerned, for we find Baillie writing on 26th January to express his vexation at a "report that is whispered of the King's purpose to go to our army."† The dread consequences of such a move were all too apparent to the worthy Principal, who declared that his party would be proclaimed the most wicked traitors that ever were born, and that if Charles persisted in his plan, it would but lead to his undoing, and involve the ruin of those who were most anxious to save him. Meanwhile, Montereul continued his negotiations with such success that by March he had obtained a written undertaking from Sir Robert Moray, on behalf of the Scots, that if Charles came to their army he would be received "with all honour and respect," on condition that, in addition to the proposals made to him at Uxbridge regarding the Church, the Militia, and Ireland, he should sign the Covenant either before, or upon his arrival in the Scottish camp.

Knowing that Charles would never look at such terms, Montereul again approached the Scots, and this time with slightly better success, though they were still adamant on two points—Charles must fall in with the ecclesiastical settlement made by the Parliaments and

\* "Life of Alexander Leslie," p. 394.

† Letter 130.



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Assemblies of the two nations, and he must surrender the control of the Militia for a period of seven years. These were reasonable enough demands, and Montereul knew it. But Charles, obstinate to the last, could not, or would not, be brought to see wherein his salvation lay. For the nonce, he inclined to London rather than to Newark, and it was only when Parliament replied to his overtures in language which could not be mistaken, that he at last allowed Montereul to go to Newark and prepare the way for his coming.

“Hard pills to be swallowed by a wilful and an unadvised prince—but at last he must determine.” So wrote Baillie to his kinsman, Mr. Spang. But Charles had no intention of swallowing any more pills than he could help, and his announcement that he was “very willing to be instructed concerning the Presbyterian government,” and to content the Scots in anything that should not be against his conscience,\* did not satisfy those who were for the Covenant, and nothing but the Covenant.

Even the optimistic Montereul saw this determination, and he was in grave doubts as to whether Charles should come to the Scots at all. However, Charles solved the difficulty for him by at last taking the decisive step. On 27th April he rode out of Oxford in disguise; on 6th May he presented himself at Montereul’s quarters in the Scottish camp.

It would be wrong to say that the Scots were

\* Gardiner’s “Civil War,” iii. p. 87.

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not anxious to obtain possession of the King, for the arguments in favour of Presbyterianism appeared so infallible to them, that they never dreamed of Charles not acquiescing, once these had been put before him. What would happen if he refused was a question which none of them seem to have faced.

Although the King's coming had been talked of for so long, when the event did take place the Scots were seized with something akin to consternation. Explanations had to be made to the English Parliament, and to lend colour to these, Charles was treated with scant ceremony that the fact of his being a prisoner rather than a king might be emphasised. As might be expected, Parliament took the most sinister view of the whole affair, and they showed their displeasure by voting "that this kingdom hath no further use of the continuing of the Scotts army within the kingdom of England."

Such censure did not trouble the Scots as much as it would have done a year or so back, for the hope of securing uniformity in religion, which had spurred them on at the outset, was rapidly fading. Now they had the King himself to work on, and they looked to him to sanction and establish that same union of religion which Parliament had refused to bring about. True, when he had put himself in their hands, no definite agreement had been made. But so desperate was the condition of his affairs that the Scots had good reason to hope that, in all honesty,

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he would accept the conditions they offered him.\*

Under such circumstances, it was obviously the King's cue to temporise, and accordingly he forced himself to listen to the first of many sermons of the same burden and advice. Mr. Robert Douglas, who was the preacher on 16th May, "spake home to him, and advised him to dispose his spirit to peace and unity," and it was probably a surfeit of such sermonising which led Charles to complain to the Queen of the "barbarous usage" to which he had been subjected since arriving in Newcastle.

It soon became apparent that unless the King himself took the Covenant, and consented to establish Presbyterian government in both kingdoms, matters would never be satisfactorily settled. When pressed upon the point, Charles reiterated the old doubts which had served him at Uxbridge, but said that he was not ashamed to change his judgment or alter his resolution, providing the Scots could satisfy him on the following two points:—(1) That the episcopacy he contended for was not of divine institution; and (2) that his coronation oath did not bind him to support and defend the Church of England as it was then established. At the same time, he expressed the desire that Alexander Henderson might be summoned to Newcastle to discuss with him these scruples about which he had such difficulty.

The Scots could not have desired a more

\* "Life of Alex. Leslie," pp. 400-402.

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doughty champion of Presbyterianism, and so Henderson was called upon to face what was undoubtedly the gravest crisis of his life. That he was in every way suited for the difficult task, historians have unanimously conceded. Neal speaks of him as a divine of great learning and abilities, as well as discretion and prudence;\* Burnet uses similar language; and Rushworth declares that he had more moderation than most of his way.

It was with high hopes, then, that the Scots welcomed Henderson to Newcastle on 16th May,† while his friends in London were also full of kind thoughts, Baillie writing on the 19th, “The Lord be with you; and help you in this hardest passage of this great work.”

On 26th May the great debate was inaugurated by Charles, who drew up his own papers, giving them to Sir Robert Moray to transcribe and then deliver to Henderson. It had evidently not been the King’s intention to debate the two questions referred to above in person. Henderson, however, was eager for a personal correspondence, and Charles consented. “I shall not contest with you in it,” he wrote, “but treating you as my physician, give you leave to take your own way of cure.”

As Professor Terry remarks,‡ however, the efficacy of the cure must depend in some sort upon the temperament of the patient, and Charles,

\* “Hist. of Puritans,” iii. 399.

† “Life of A. Leslie,” p. 414. The “Dict. Nat. Biog.” gives the date as 26th May, but this is wrong.

‡ *Idem*, p. 415.



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in his first letter, offered little hope of Henderson's treatment prevailing over the errors which he had been invited to correct. The Church of England, he affirmed, has been maintained according to apostolic ordinances, and any alteration would lead to the nation being deprived of a lawful priesthood, and the sacraments becoming a nullity. Accordingly, he believes bishops to be necessary for a church, and cannot consent to their expulsion. The terms of his coronation oath only serve to strengthen him in this resolution; and he asks Henderson what warrant there is for subjects endeavouring to force the King's conscience, or make him alter laws against his will.

A week later Henderson sent a very lengthy reply, in connection with which Burnet notes that the King took much less time to prepare his papers, and that as Henderson's writing was not very legible, Sir Robert Moray recopied them for Charles's perusal.

After some initial courtesies and compliments, Henderson observes that, like most reformation, that of Henry VIII. was most imperfect in the essentials of doctrine, worship, and government—"the head was changed, *dominus non dominium*, and the whole limbs of the anti-christian hierarchy retained." The result has been more schism and separation than in any other Church. With regard to what Charles said about the priesthood, presbyter and bishop were one and the same to the apostles. In Scripture there is no mention of a pastor or bishop superior



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to other pastors. Why, then, a pastor above other pastors !

Touching the difficulty of the coronation oath, Henderson is sympathetic, but shrewdly points out that when the Parliaments of both kingdoms have decided to abolish a law, such an oath does not bind the sovereign or his conscience to the observance of it ; otherwise, no laws could be altered by the legislative power. In concluding, he remarks that King James VI., who never admitted the divine right of episcopacy, but swore to uphold the doctrine and worship of the Church of Scotland, would, were he still alive, strongly advise his son not to suffer with those who would rather involve him in their own ruin than perish alone.

In his second paper, dated 6th June, the King shows his keen love for dialectics, but it would serve no useful purpose to detail at length the word-spinning and casuistry to which both disputants resorted. Charles asserts that Presbyterianism only dated from Calvin's time, and calls on Henderson to prove that presbyters without a bishop may ordain other presbyters. With regard to his coronation oath, this was taken in favour of the Church of England, which alone can release him from it.

In replying, Henderson quotes Scripture to show the antiquity of Presbyterianism, and to prove that presbyters may ordain other presbyters without a bishop, he refers the King to 1 Timothy iv. 14. Touching the coronation oath, he does not consider the con-

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sent of the clergy to be absolutely necessary to Church reformation, for if so, what would be expected in France, in Spain, or in Rome itself?

To this the King responds by saying that inferior magistrates and people have no authority to reform religion. He will prove from books that episcopacy is an apostolic institution, and he goes on to attack Henderson's other assertions, winding up with the declaration that the Church of England comes nearest the primitive doctrine and discipline.

Henderson, in his third paper of 2nd July, discusses the rules which his royal disputant had laid down for determining the controversy of Church government—"which are the practice of the primitive Church and the universal consent of the fathers." He declares that there is no such primitive testimony or patristic consent in favour of modern episcopacy. Some hold in determining controversies that the Word of God and antiquity are of equal value; others would interpret the Word of God by antiquity. Henderson, however, holds that Scripture can only be interpreted by Scripture. Many errors (of which examples are given) have passed muster under the cloak of antiquity and tradition, and so it is impossible to know exactly what was the universal consent and practice of the primitive Church.

A day later, the King sent Henderson his fourth paper, in which he says that, as they differed widely in their interpretation of Scripture,

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they cannot make headway without an arbiter to determine their differences, or, at least, to decide as to the relevancy of their disputations. In his fifth paper, dated 16th July, Charles writes in the same strain. He will not attempt to answer Henderson categorically. He then goes on to assert that those who object to the ancient rites and usages of the Church must first prove them unlawful, otherwise the practice of the Church is sufficient to warrant them. While difficult, it is by no means impossible to ascertain the universal consent and practice of the primitive Church. Though no authority is equal to the Scriptures, he concludes, yet the unanimous consent of the fathers and the universal practice of the primitive Church are the best interpreters of God's Word, and consequently the fittest judges between himself and Henderson, until better are discovered. "For example, I think you, for the present, the best preacher in Newcastle, yet I believe you may err, and possibly a better preacher may come; but till then I must retain my opinion."

These words closed the famous controversy between Henderson and his King, though Wodrow tells us\* that the former penned a reply which was suppressed in order that the last word might lie with Charles. And when we are asked our opinion of it all, what shall we say? *Palman qui meruit, ferat*, and the judgment of historians is apt to be coloured by their partisan leanings. Burnet, for instance,

\* "Historical Fragments," p. 77.

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declares \* that, "had His Majestie's armes been as strong as his reason was, he had been every way unconquerable, since none have the disingenuity to deny the great advantages His Majesty had in all these writings. And this was so when the half of his Chaplains could not be suspected, they being so far from him. And it is indeed strange to see a prince not only able to hold up with, but so far to outrun so great a Theologue, in a Controversie which had exercised his thoughts and studies for so many years."

On the other hand, the Presbyterians assert that Henderson's arguments were texts of Scripture, proving unanswerably the identity between bishops and presbyters, while the King found his authorities in the patristic writings, which were the work of fallible men, and in many cases, grossly erroneous.

Perhaps the real truth lies midway between these two views. The argument on both sides was candid, learned, and logical, and though opinions are divided as to which disputant should bear the palm, it is certain, as Cunningham says, that neither obtained the victory.†

It was a crowning misfortune for the cause at stake that, at this critical juncture, Henderson's health failed him, and he had to withdraw from the debate which he had carried on with so much courtesy and restraint. During the last year or two, as we have seen, the strain of constant attendance at the Westminster Assembly had

\* "Lives of J. and W. Hamilton."

† "Church History," ii. 58.



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preyed on his health, and even when he came to Newcastle, he was far from well.\* He was now in his sixty-fourth year, and his life had been a very full and strenuous one. The failure of his efforts to convince the King, and his apprehension of what was in store for the unhappy monarch, for whom he cherished a sincere affection, helped not a little to aggravate his condition.

His friend Baillie was greatly agitated by the news, and wrote on 4th August: "Your sickness hath much grieved my heart. It is a part of my prayers to God, to restore you to health, and continue your service at this so necessary a time. We had never so much need of you as now."† He goes on to speak of the King's obstinacy: "I fear this be the fountain of your disease; yet I am sure, if you would take courage, and digest what cannot be got amended, and if, after the shaking off melancholious thoughts, the Lord might be pleased to strengthen you at this time, you would much more promote the honour of God, the welfare of Scotland and England, the comfort of many thousands, than you can do by weakening of your body and mind with such thoughts as are unprofitable."

Though he writes thus cheerfully, Baillie feared the worst, for he tells his cousin, on 7th August, that Mr. Henderson is dying most of heartbreak at Newcastle.‡ Only once more was he to write to his well-loved friend, and then the

\* Baillie, Letter 139.

† Letter 151.

‡ Letter 153.



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news was gloomy. "Your weakness is much regretted by many here. To me it is one of the sad presages of the evil coming. If it be the Lord's will, it is my hearty prayer oftentimes you might be lent to us yet for some time."

It was not to be however. Feeling that his end was not far off, Henderson determined to leave England, and visit the country from which he had been a voluntary exile for three years. About 10th August he left Newcastle, after making a final appeal to Charles "to hearken to counsel." The sea voyage to Leith made him worse; but he reached his home "neir unto the High School" of Edinburgh, and lingered on for a few days, passing away on the 19th of August, 1646.\* It is reported that though worn by bodily illness, his mind was at rest till the last. Wodrow tells how Henderson was in the company of Sir James Stewart (afterwards Lord Provost of Edinburgh), and when the latter commented on his cheerfulness, he was answered. "Well, I am near the end of my race, hasting home, and there was never a school-boy more desirous to have the play than I am to have leave of this world; and in a few days (naming the time) I will sicken and die. In my sickness I will be much out of ease to speak of any thing, but I desire that you will be with me as much as you can, and you shall see all will end well." All fell out as he had foretold. And another friend,

\* *Vide* the inscription on his tomb, misread by Aiton and others.



HENDERSON'S MONUMENT IN GREYFRIARS CHURCHYARD



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Mr. John Livingston, says, "I was several times with him on his death-bed, at Edinburgh, in the year 1646, when I heard him express great peace of mind."

Henderson was laid to rest in the old churchyard of St. Giles Cathedral, and when this was converted into the present Parliament Square, his remains were re-interred in the burying-ground of the Hendersons of Fordel, in Greyfriars Cemetery. The site of his grave is still marked by the handsome monument which was erected by his nephew, George Henderson, and which bears on all four sides Latin inscriptions testifying to his worth and his great services to the Presbyterian faith.

The news of the death of such an honoured man was received with sorrow by friends and foes alike. But though they regretted the event, the King's friends saw a splendid opportunity of making party capital out of it, and they managed to stir up a controversy which lasted for more than a hundred years. The first hint of what was impending was given in "A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament," one of the news-letters of the day. Under date Monday, 31st August, appeared the following:—"This day, the House not sitting, the only news was by letter from the north; and first of all, a sad lamentation for the death of Mr. Henderson, the Scottish minister, who went from Newcastle to Edinburgh; seemed much discontented that he was frustrate in his expectations, in that he could not persuade His Majesty to a compliance, and to

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syne the propositions; fell sick at Edinburgh, and there died."

Now there can be little doubt that the failure of his attempts to influence the King, and his fears for the future, had something to do in hastening Henderson's end. But it is going too far to assert that he died of a broken heart. We have seen that he had been in poor health for a long time; and while the exact cause of his death is doubtful (Wodrow ascribing it to fever, and the General Assembly declaring that it was consumption), it is certain that it was due to a physical malady. Nevertheless, certain historians have persisted in the contrary opinion; Clarendon, for instance, asserting that he had a very deep sense of the mischief that had been wrought, and that he lamented his share in it to his nearest friends and confidants, ere he died of grief.

Against these picturesque narratives we have to place the verdict of Baillie, who wrote to his cousin on 2nd October, 1646: "The false reports which went here of Mr. Henderson are, I see, also come to your hand. Believe me, for I have it under his own hand a little before his death, that he was utterly displeased with the King's ways, and ever the longer the more; and whoever say otherwise, I know they speak false. That man died as he lived, in great modesty, piety, and faith."

Still another attempt was made to damage Henderson in the eyes of posterity, and this time with more success, although the methods



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adopted were far from original. In the beginning of the year 1648, a small quarto pamphlet was published in London, purporting to give Henderson's Death-bed Declaration, dictated and signed by his own hand. According to this amazing document, Henderson, in his conversations with the King, found him to be the most intelligent man he had ever met; one, indeed, whose arguments carried such conviction that they were unanswerable. The Declaration adds that he was now heartily sorry for the share he had had in the unnatural war; that the Parliament and Synod of England had been abused with false aspersions of His Majesty; and that the good King should be restored to his just rights and dignities, lest an indelible character of ingratitude lie upon the Covenanting party. Still an even ranker heresy, which is put into his lips, was the statement that Presbyterianism was not, and never could be, suited to the English nation. "That which we esteem a godly kirk policy, instituted by the Lord Christ and His Apostles, is no better to them than a kind of slavery; and some do not stick to call it worse than the Spanish inquisition."

Naturally, the publication of this recantation created an immense stir throughout the country, and the General Assembly of that year appointed a committee to thrash the matter out. As a result of their investigations, the whole thing was declared to be a forgery, and it was announced "to their full satisfaction and assurance," that Henderson died in the principles which he had constantly professed. In support

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of this, it was pointed out that after leaving Newcastle he was far too ill to frame any such declaration; and that any remarks he made on his death-bed were those of an ardent and convinced Church reformer. This was attested before the Assembly by several ministers who visited him during his last hours, and particularly by two who were in constant attendance upon him from the time he reached Edinburgh till he was laid in the grave. Accordingly, the Assembly declared the recantation to be forged, scandalous, and false, and the author and contriver of the same to be void of charity and a good conscience; a gross liar and calumniator, and led by the spirit of the accuser of the brethren.

With this verdict no one who has given any attention to Henderson's life and work can fail to agree. But the forgery continued to be trumpeted abroad, and it was given due prominence by Bishop Kennet and Lord Clarendon; while, on the other side, Lieutenant-General Ludlow wrote a refutation in 1693 entitled "Truth Brought to Light." The controversy was reopened at a later date (1709), when a somewhat similar, but verbal recantation was related in a letter by a Mr. Sage, who declared he had it from one who was present. Aiton, in his "Life of Henderson," discusses this *canard* at some length, but as the whole thing is based on hearsay evidence, it may be summarily dismissed.

That all these attempts should have been

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made to indicate Henderson's complete abdication of a well-nigh life-long position only seems, to the writer, to enhance the importance of the part he played on the national stage. That his influence was potent long after his death is also to be deduced, and hence one concludes that the Royalists were actuated in all they did by one of two motives. Either they wished to discredit Henderson in the eyes of the Covenanters, or else they were anxious to prove that such a notable protagonist had seen the error of his ways, and had announced his change of front in a manner which, under the solemn circumstances, could not fail to impress his former associates.

If his enemies were so anxious to enlist Henderson on their side, by fair means or foul, what shall we say of his friends? Here, at least, there is no room for doubt. He was beloved by all who knew him, and as a leader he was unhesitatingly followed. His death marked the beginning of dark days for the Church to which he belonged, and which was never again to wield the same dominance over the affairs of its own and other countries, as it had done while he was its guiding spirit and protector.

## X

### Henderson the Man

HENDERSON never married, and his not inconsiderable property, after provision had been made for several relatives, went in various bequests. He left over £2530 sterling, besides the small farm of Pittenbrog, near Leuchars, which he had purchased in 1630. His interest in education was reflected in his legacies, for this little property, together with Four pounds, ten shillings, and sixpence sterling, was bequeathed to those holding the office of schoolmaster at Leuchars. He also bequeathed the sum of two thousand merks for the maintenance of a school in his native village of Luthrie. To the University of St. Andrews he had, in 1632, presented the sum of £1000 Scots, to assist in stocking the library.

A clause in his latter will ordained his executors "to deliver to my deir aquantance, Mr. John Duncane, at Culross, and Mr. William Dalgleische, minister at Cramond, all the manuscripts and papers quhilk ar in my studie, and that belong to me any quhair els, and efter they have reveisit thame, to destroy or preserve and kepe thame as they sall judge convenient for thair awine privat or the public good." His publications, however, were not numerous,

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and consisted mainly of fugitive sermons and pamphlets. Many of them have been referred to in the course of this narrative. Others, delivered at Leuchars and St. Andrews between February and November, 1638, have been gathered together under the title: "Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses" (Edinburgh, 1867). Henderson was too much occupied with outside affairs to find time for any arduous or sustained literary work.

His polemical tracts were couched in terse and vigorous language, and were eminently suited to the purpose for which they were written. The workings of an eminently logical mind are shown in everything he penned, and we can well understand why he was called on to draw up such vitally important documents as the two Covenants. He sought always to convince and convert, and this trait appears also in his sermons, although these latter were written with a forceful eloquence, and with more attention to literary style and grace.

It only remains to be added that he was exceedingly popular as a speaker. "Wherever he preached," says one authority, "it was to crowded audiences; and when he pleaded or argued, he was regarded with mute attention."

No less than six original portraits of Henderson, all of them in Scotland, are enumerated by Aiton, whose vivid pen-picture is well worth quoting: "His countenance bespeaks mild determination, indicative, in the earlier stages of his public life, of anxiety, but in after years, of melancholy, and



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even disease. His forehead does not seem to have been remarkably high or prominent, but it is deeply furrowed with the wrinkles of care, even in those paintings which represent him in perfect health. All the artists have given him an eye expressive of benignity and passive courage. His jet-black hair, his short beard on the chin and upper lip, his black gown over a dark coloured cassock, and the sombre hue of his complexion, give the whole canvas the cast of a saint in deep mourning; and this impression is rather heightened than relieved by the ruff of puckered linen worn, at that period, round the neck."

One cannot close this brief survey without paying an unstinted tribute to Henderson for his services to the Church and Kingdom of Scotland. An endeavour has been made to trace and comment on the leading incidents in his busy life, but a sweeping survey of his character and work may not be out of place. Seldom has a man entered the arena of political and ecclesiastical strife with such clean hands as Henderson. Essentially a scholar and a recluse, he was dragged into the turmoil against his will, although once he had accepted the inevitable he never looked back. Still, the separation from his books and his tranquil life came as a sharp wrench, and he was moved to wonder that one of his disposition should be called to lead his countrymen in their struggle for religious liberty. "When from my sense of myself," he says in the preface of one of his published sermons, "and of my own

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thoughts and ways, I begin to remember how men who love to live obscurely and in the shadow are brought forth to light, to the view and talking of the world; how men that love quietness are made to stir and to have a hand in public business; how men that love soliloquies and contemplations are brought to act the things which they never determined, nor so much as dreamed of before; the words of the prophet Jeremiah come to my remembrance: 'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself.'"

Right manfully, however, did he shoulder his burden, and step out to face whatever the future might bring. Samuel Rutherford had told him of the difficulties which lay ahead: "The wind is now on Christ's face in this land, and seeing ye are with Him, ye cannot expect the leese, or the sunny side, of the brae." However, there were latent in him the instincts both of the statesman and the leader of men, and the first crisis he had to face brought these to the surface. At a single bound, the country minister became the experienced diplomatist, and subsequent events only served to heighten his power and prestige. He was absolutely disinterested, too, and while many of his colleagues were greedily seeking place and power, he only strove to do his duty to his God and country.

Emphasis has already been laid on the fact that his talents were primarily of the diplomatic order. True, he could indite a fiery polemic with the best of them, but his disposition was of the *suaviter in modo* order, rather than the *fortiter*

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*in re.* It was this fact which led Charles to show him such signal marks of esteem and affection, which caused the Covenanters to choose him for the most delicate negotiations, but which also encouraged some of the extremists to accuse him of waning zeal, and even worse.

He was as little of a fanatic in his attitude to the general situation in Church and State. As the King rushed from folly to folly, his heart sank when he saw what the inevitable outcome would be, and doubtless he was even glad that death came to him when it did. Even when his differences with Charles were most acute, the thought of a republic never entered his mind as a way out of the difficulty, and he fought with might and main against the dangerous tendencies of the Cromwellian party in the Westminster Assembly. Henderson was a zealous Presbyterian, but he was a good Royalist too, and one who would have died to save his King. One is tempted to speculate on the attitude he would have adopted, had his life been prolonged. Probably events might have taken a very different course, and the ills which befell Scotland might have been minimised, if not altogether avoided.

The charge of bigotry and intolerance has been levelled against Henderson and his friends by successive historians, the latest onslaught coming from Mr. Andrew Lang, who pours undiluted vitriol on the "pettifogging Covenant" and its authors. It is true that to modern eyes their position is no longer tenable, and that it controverts all our notions of toleration. *Autre*

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*temps, autre mœurs*, however, and we must not judge them too harshly. Henderson was honestly convinced that Presbyterianism was the true faith, and it seemed a solemn duty to him to urge it on the unenlightened both at home and abroad. But he stood out against coercion all his days, and he was prepared to make concessions, at all events till he found that no one else would meet him half way.

The charge that Presbyterianism was thrust down the throats of the unwilling English has, however, gone too long unchallenged. What are the true facts? It must be remembered that the first overtures anent presbytery came from the English themselves, although the idea was probably dangled before the Covenanters as a bait to secure the co-operation of their army. But Henderson would have been less than human had he not jumped at the chance of securing the adoption of his creed by the bulk of the English nation. If he was to blame for taking advantage of their helpless state, they were equally culpable in signing a bond which they had no intention of keeping. And here the matter may rest.

Henderson's greatness is never so clearly realised as when we take toll of the men among whom he moved. There have been those who attained to adventitious heights simply because they lived at a time when there was a dearth of genuinely able leaders. But the Covenanting ranks embraced men of the highest talents, men whose claim to eminence was real and undisputed. The fact that in a party which contained



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Montrose, Argyll, Rothes, Loudon, Warriston, Samuel Rutherford, and Robert Baillie, Henderson was an outstanding figure, enables us to realise the power of his personality in a way nothing else can. That he never once betrayed the confidence reposed in him, and the influence which he was enabled to exercise is equally worthy of note.

The virtues of the great are apt to be over-estimated after they are dead and gone, but there is not one word of exaggeration in the eulogy which Baillie delivered to the General Assembly in 1647, and with which this essay may fitly conclude:—"That glorious soul of blessed memory, who now is crowned with the reward of all his labours for God and for us, I wish his remembrance may be fragrant among us, so long as free and pure Assemblies remain in this land, which we hope shall be to the coming of our Lord. You know he spent his strength, and wore out his days, he breathed out his life in the service of God and of his Church. This binds it on our back, as we would not prove ungrateful, to pay him his due. If the thoughts of others be conform to my inmost sense, in duty and reason, *he ought to be accounted by us and posterity the fairest ornament, after John Knox, of incomparable memory, that we the Church of Scotland did enjoy.*"



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